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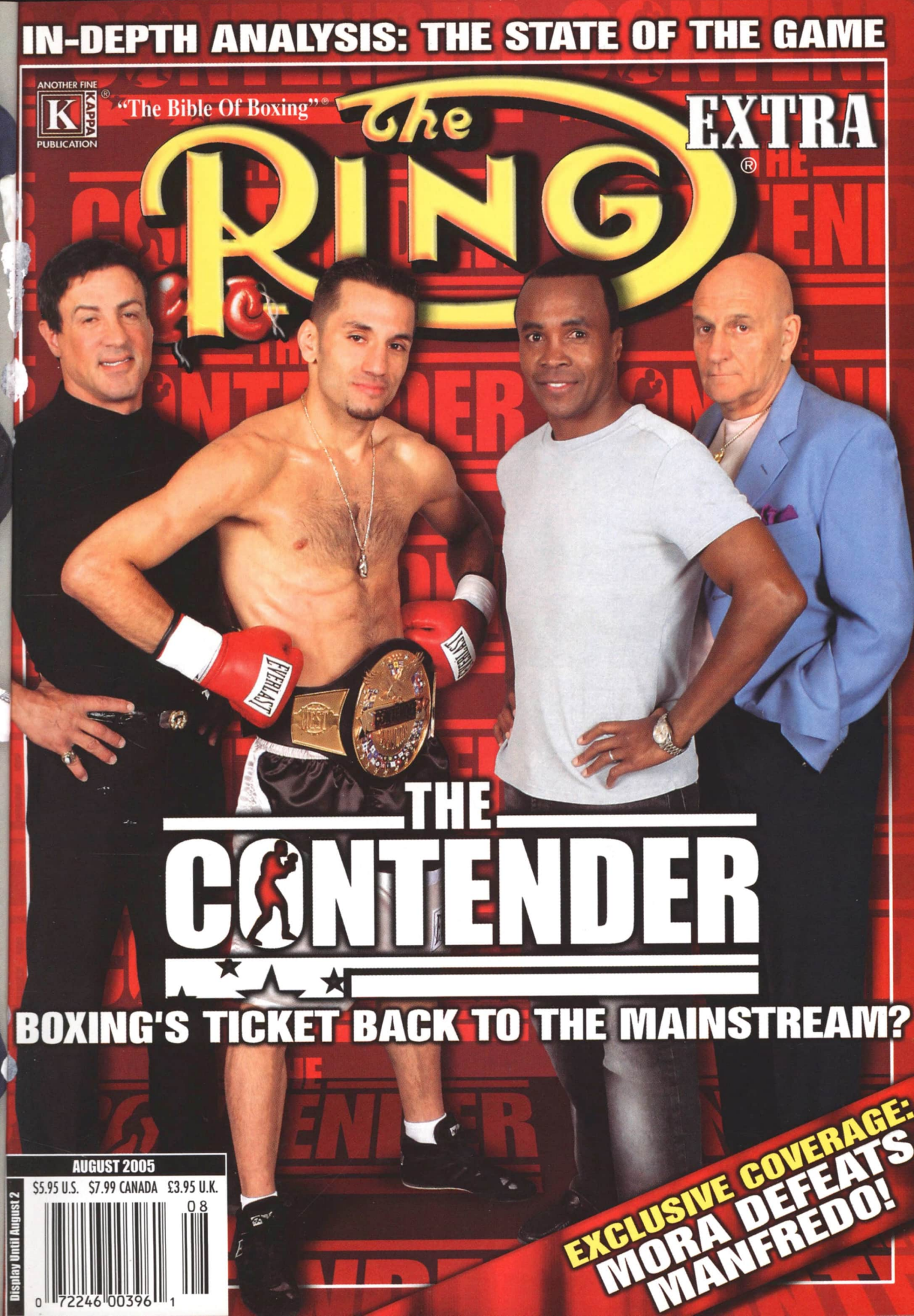

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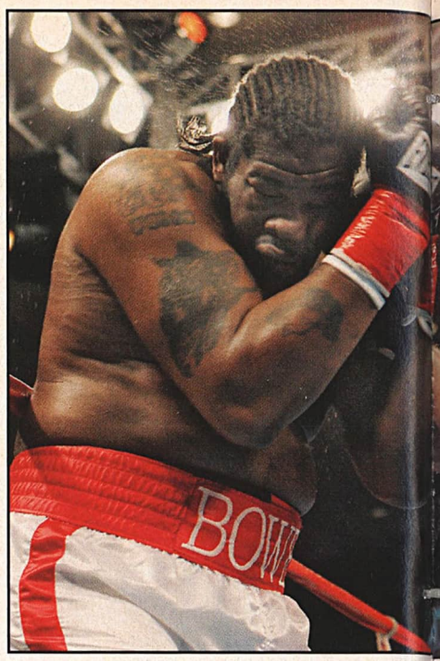

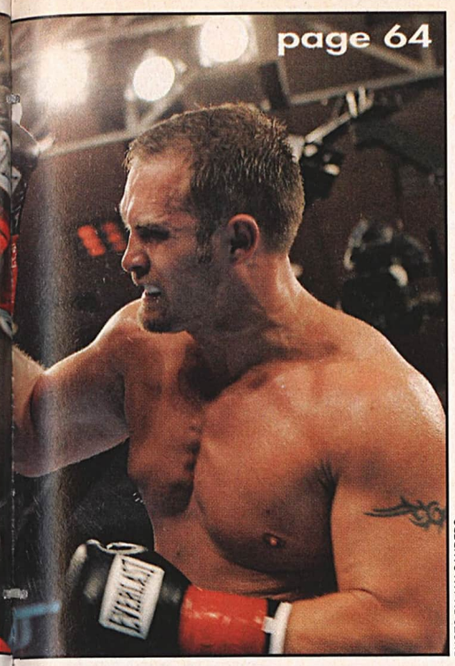

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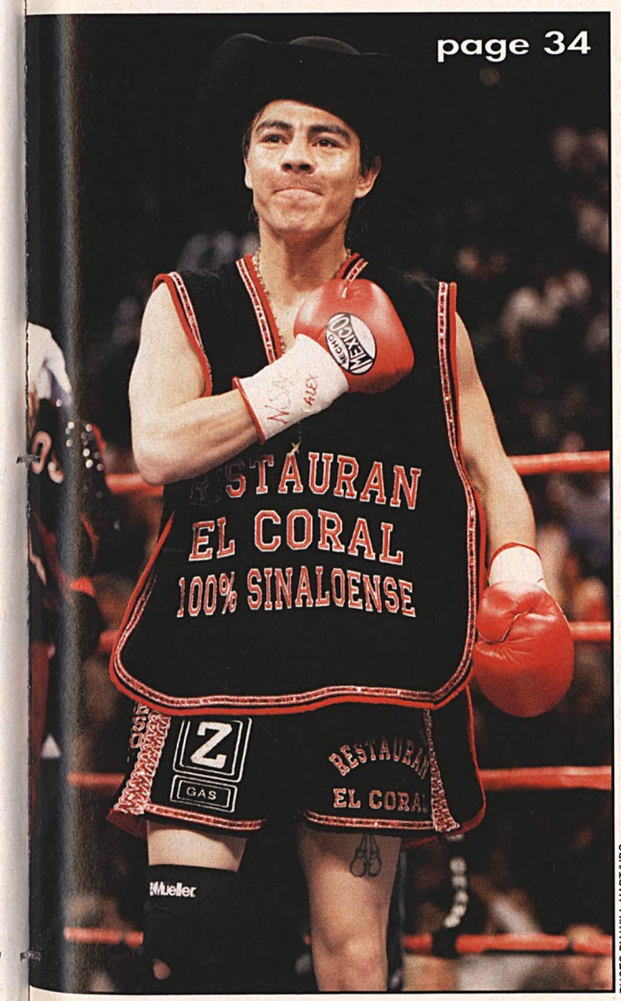

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RINGSIDE

Boxing writers are supposed to be a hard-boiled bunch, but I have to admit that I had a lump in my throat a couple of times recently. Maybe I'm getting soft, but after seeing so many fighters blubbering on *The Contender*, I feel relatively comfortable sharing my sentimental side.

Watching *Ring Of Fire: The Emile Griffith Story* on the USA Network turned out to be an unexpectedly poignant experience. There have been several excellent boxing documentaries on television this year, including Ken Burns' *Unforgivable Blackness: The Rise And Fall Of Jack Johnson* and the *American Experience*'s in-depth look at the Joe Louis-Max Schmeling rivalry. But as good as they were, for me, *Ring Of Fire* had a far greater emotional impact.

Like so many of my generation, I watched the tragic third fight between Griffith and Benny "Kid" Paret live on television, and sat there slack-jawed and numb as the final moments of the fight were replayed again and again. I was still an impressionable schoolboy at the time, and witnessing my first boxing fatality proved to be something of a personal tipping point. I could have turned away from the hardest "game," but I didn't. Instead, I swallowed my horror, suppressed my sadness, and became infuriated with the politicians who tried to use the tragedy to further their own agendas.

Nonetheless, as I watched *Ring Of Fire*, the grief I thought I'd buried all those decades ago resurfaced—grief for Benny and his loved ones, grief for Emile, and grief for this so-called sport of ours. But it's too late to turn back now; I'm thoroughly addicted to what Don Elbaum so aptly called a "beautiful sickness."

My late friend and colleague Jack Welsh would have understood. He was as big a boxing junkie as I, and it was Jack's death that provided the second punch of the emotion-stirring combination that rocked me this spring.

I first befriended Jack back in the mid-1970s when he was the boxing writer for the now-defunct *Philadelphia Journal*, and when he moved to Las Vegas in the mid-'80s, Jack covered numerous big fights for THE RING. Later, he wrote a gambling column in *World Boxing*, one of THE RING's sister publications.

Jack was a colorful character, and you may have read about some of his alcohol-fueled hijinks in the many tributes written about him when he died in late-April at the age of 76. But it wasn't just his madcap escapades that made Jack such a lovable guy. He was also a kind, generous, funny man—and a dedicated reporter.

Jack used to procure guests for Lee Pete's Vegas-based radio show, and frequently joined Pete and his guests during the broadcast. One night, Jack was on air with Pete and Archie Moore when he suffered a heart attack. An ambulance rushed him to the hospital, where he underwent an emergency triple bypass.

The first thing Jack did when he regained consciousness after surgery was phone a publicist from his hospital bed to tell him not to cancel his media credential for the big fight that coming weekend. Less than two weeks after he was stricken, Jack was back at ringside among the working press.

The neon signs will continue to glow, but Las Vegas will never seem quite as bright without Jack. For me, he put a human face on a city that often seems without a heart or soul. And although I'm not much of a drinking man, the next time I'm in town, I'll hoist a cold one in Jack's honor … and maybe one for Benny too.

Nigel Collins
Editor-in-Chief

Volume 84, No. 8 **August 2005**

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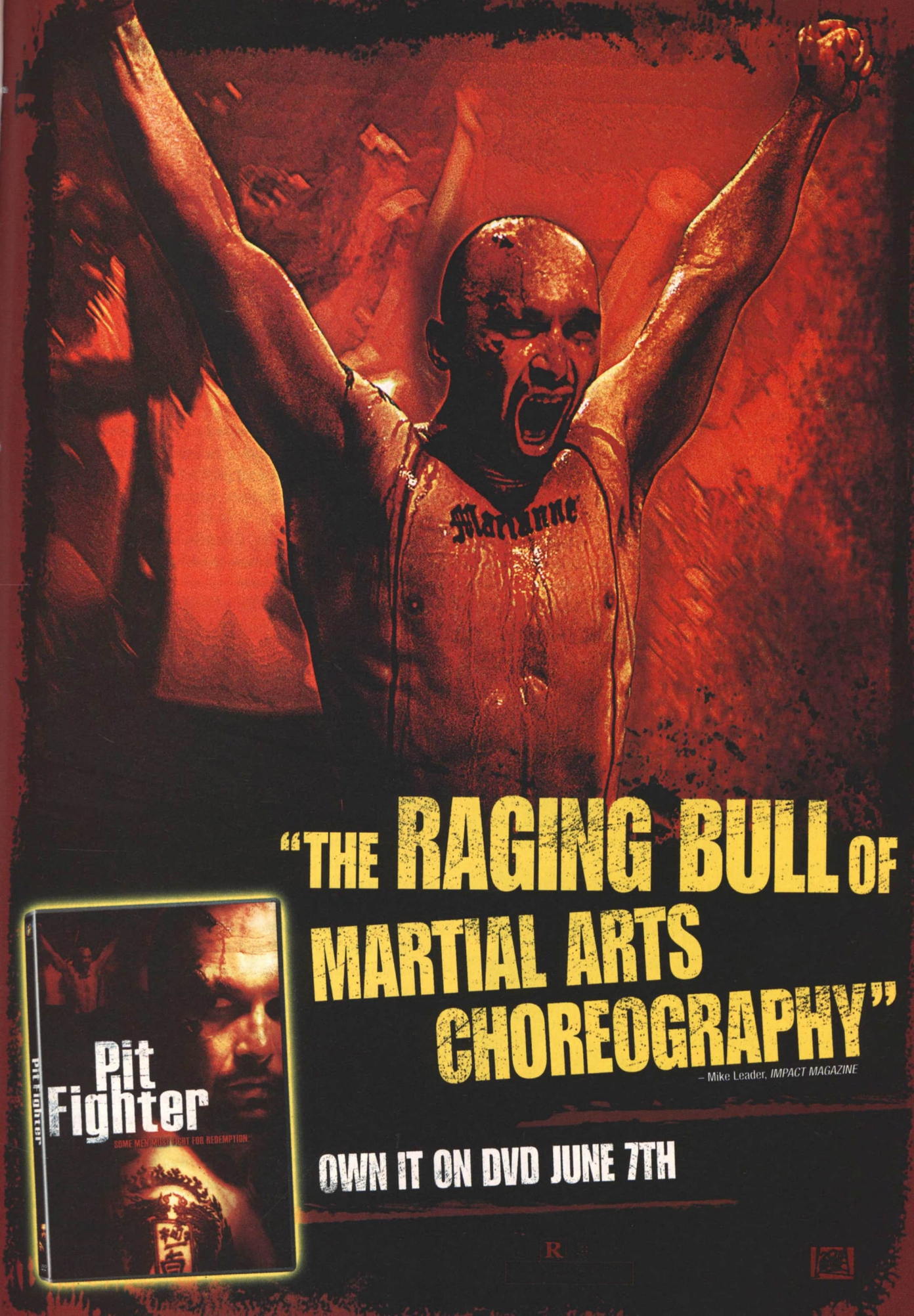
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ROUND ONE

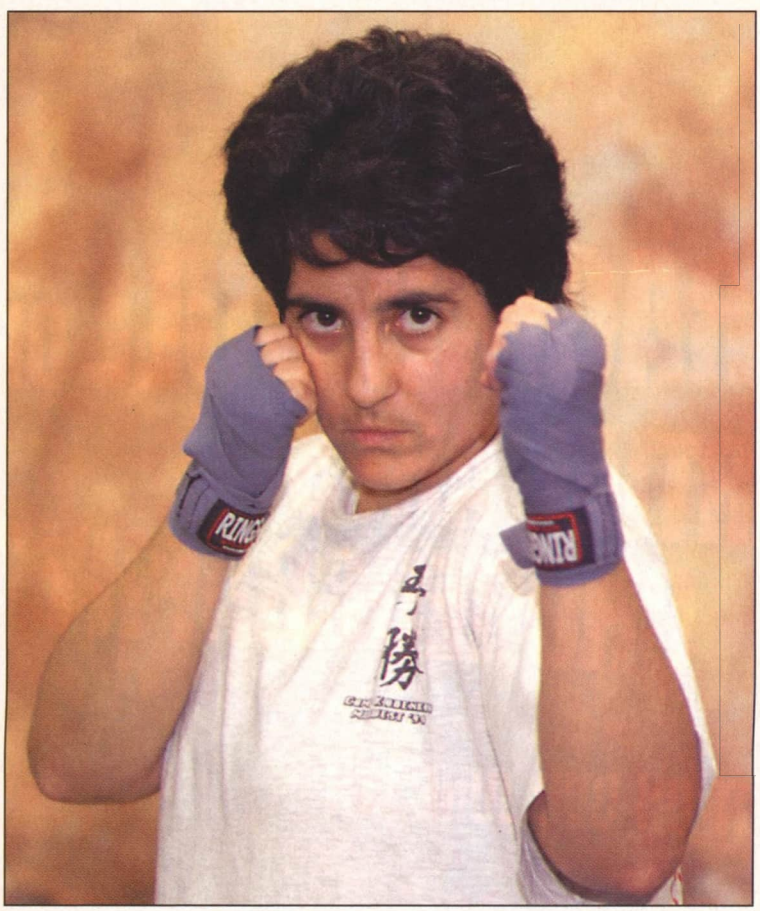
ZERLENTES' DEATH STUNS BOXING

Becky Zerlentes was a vibrant young woman who taught at a local community college and wasn't afraid to try anything. She also had a zest for competition, which led her into the boxing ring in 2002. A former Colorado amateur champion, Zerlentes decided to end a two-year layoff and compete in the Colorado Golden Gloves championships in early-April. It wound up being a tragic mistake.

Zerlentes, 34, wearing thickly padded head gear, collapsed after receiving a right hand to the head by Heather Schmitz in the final round of their three-round fight on April 2. Zerlentes went into a coma and died the next day. The cause of death was blunt-force trauma. A postfight CAT Scan at a nearby hospital revealed a subdural hematoma pressing on Zerlentes' brain. Zerlentes became the first female fighter to die in a professional or amateur bout in the United States.

Glenn DePriest, who owns the Hard Knocks Gym in Milliken, Colorado, where Zerlentes trained, watched the Zerlentes-Schmitz fight at ringside. He has seen his share of oddities in boxing during his nearly 30-year involvement with amateur boxing, but nothing like this.

When the fatal punch was thrown, DePriest didn't see any shoulder movement or body movement by Schmitz. The shot landed on top of Zerlentes' headgear, across her brow. It wasn't a hard punch. "Becky looked good in the Schmitz fight, she was doing really well," DePriest said. "I saw the punch and watched it a number of times on tape. It wasn't a hard right hand, it was more of a slap.



Zerlentes' death shocked the sport

"She didn't get hit hard previous to that one punch, either," DePriest said. "She took a right to the nose [in the second round] and it didn't take a lot for Becky to get a bloody nose anyway. She came back out in the third round. It surprised me. We have 10-year-old boxers who hit harder than that punch. It looked like a friendly slap. It wasn't a hard punch and that's what so baffling about this whole thing."

It's too soon to say what impact Zerlentes' death might have on the sport. "I really don't think it will hurt women's boxing," said world-class professional Sumya Anani, who spoke at the memorial service. "It might highlight more of the things that need to be fixed about the sport, like there's not the right emergency care at fights. Time will tell whether or not this tragedy hurts it. This was so rare; it was just a freak thing."

There is no doubt, however, about the impact on Zerlentes' family and those she came in contact with.

"Becky was always offering to help others in the gym," DePriest said. "If you have an amateur boxing club, it's all like they're a family. Becky was an unselfish person, almost too polite at times. She'd comment in the middle of sparring and tell someone she's sorry for hitting them too hard. I used to tell her she was too nice to be a boxer."

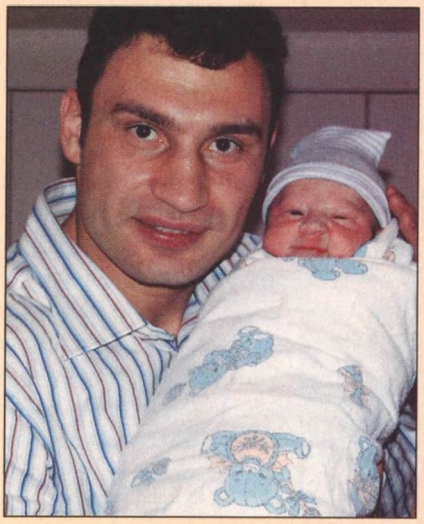
—Joe Santoliquito

BABY AND BACK BOTH DOING WELL

April was a busy month for heavyweight champion Vitali Klitschko, but trips to the hospital were far more frequent than gym workouts.

On the first day of the month, his wife, Natalie, gave birth to their third child, a boy who weighed in at just over nine pounds. The proud parents named him Max, after former heavyweight champion Max Schmeling, who died in February at the age of 99.

"Max Schmeling was my idol and one of the greatest human beings I will ever meet in my life," said Klitschko. "This was our way of paying homage to him, not just for what he did as a boxer, but also for his outstanding accomplishments outside the ring. I can't wait until he gets older to tell Max what a great humanitarian and person Max Schmeling was."



Proud poppa Vitali and baby Max

The Klistchkos' two other children are five-year-old Igor-Daniel and two-year-old Elizabeth.

It was Vitali's turn to seek medical assistance later in the month when he underwent a 35-minute operation on his back.

"There was a little spur on the spine that was pushing on a nerve and it was really hurting him," said Bernd Boente, Klitschko's personal manager. "He tried to work it out the conventional way, trying to get injections for a week or so. That did not help, so the doctor said to have the surgery."

The procedure forced the second postponement of Klitschko's defense against former world champion Hasim Rahman, but the champ should be ready to rumble in the fall.

"It was really a minor surgery," said Boente. "He will have to rehab for about six weeks, but Vitali will definitely be able to fight in September."

MESI'S CAREER COULD BE OVER

Joe Mesi sustained the mightiest blow of his boxing career, and it occurred in a conference room.

The Nevada State Athletic Commission's medical advisory board unanimously voted on April 18 to uphold the suspension placed on the former heavyweight contender. The NSAC suspended Mesi after he sustained multiple subdural hematomas in his March 2004 bout with Vassiliy Jirov in Las Vegas. Mesi reopened one of the brain bleeds a few weeks later while moving furniture into his new suburban Buffalo home.

The NSAC, using the medical advisory board's advice, was to make a final decision on Mesi's request to lift the suspension May 5. The Muhammad Ali Act mandates a state's medical suspension be honored across the country. That would essentially ban Mesi from fighting in the U.S. unless the NSAC goes against its medical advisory board for the first time since it was created in 1983 after Deuk-Koo Kim died following his fight with Ray Mancini at Caesars Palace.

"You're at significant risk of injury cranially and possibly even dying in the ring," neurosurgeon Albert Capanna told Mesi at the hearing.

Mesi, 29-0 (25), said the board physicians were "playing God. They don't know the outcome of what those fights will be."

Mesi deferred comment until after May 5 on what his next step will be, but it's likely he'll go down swinging. His father and manager, Jack Mesi, indicated they would sue the NSAC. The Mesi camp contends there is no scientific evidence that shows he's at an increased risk to experience subdural hematomas in the future.

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

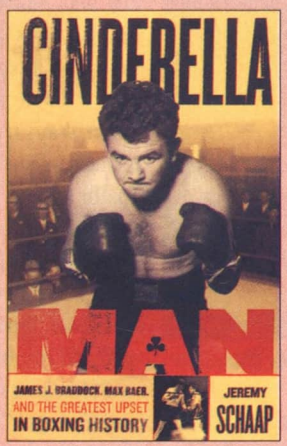
Mesi takes one of three counts in the Jirov fight

"We've got several options," Mesi said. "There could be an appeal process. We could go to court. Fighting overseas is an option or we could altogether retire from the sport and go into other things."

—Tim Graham

THE BOXING BOOKSHELF

Among boxing fans, there is a swirl of anticipation surrounding June's theatrical release of the boxing biopic *Cinderella Man*. And how could there not be? A pair of Hollywood heavyweights in director Ron Howard and actor Russell Crowe, both Academy Award winners, have teamed up to deliver the life story of James J. Braddock and the improbable ring odyssey that saw him capture the heavyweight crown from Max Baer in 1935 to the screen. But before dashing off to the closest multiplex, fans may find it rewarding to pick up a copy of Jeremy Schaap's richly detailed biography *Cinderella Man: James J. Braddock, Max Baer And The Greatest Upset In Boxing History* (Houghton Mifflin, 336 pages, hardbound, $24.00).



Emmy Award winning journalist Schaap currently does double duty at ESPN as the host of its current events show *Between The Lines* and its critically acclaimed *Sports Century* series. The son of legendary sports journalist Dick Schaap, Jeremy has showcased his boxing savvy as a roving reporter on ESPN fights. Now, with *Cinderella Man*, Schaap has established himself as a gifted storyteller with a nuanced understanding of the fight game and an aptitude for portraying its colorful personalities.

Up until the underachieving Buster Douglas defied 40-1 odds to unseat Mike Tyson from the heavyweight throne, boxing folklore often cited Braddock as the unlikeliest man to capture the heavyweight belt. Upon finishing *Cinderella Man*, readers might conclude that Braddock's accomplishment remains the most remarkable feat of any heavyweight champion.

Prior to his knockout of heavyweight prospect Corn Griffin in June 1934, Braddock had been written off as a washed-up, bloated light heavyweight. He was fighting—and frequently losing—to earn income for his family during the bleakest days of the Depression. By late-1933, Braddock had abandoned boxing after his right hand was rendered impotent from chronic injuries, and an extended string of losses stripped him of all credibility as a viable contender. But beginning with the knockout of Griffin, Braddock embarked on a remarkable four-fight comeback that took him all the way to a title bout against Baer in the span of 12 short months.

To his credit, Schaap ensures the story is never bogged down in unnecessary sentimentality or the usual cliched fare typically associated with inspiring tales of the underdog. The book is as much a human interest piece as it is a boxing story. Braddock's struggles as family man and provider during the Depression will leave a reader feeling sympathetic, while his rebirth as a fighter in the months before winning the heavyweight title builds with requisite drama.

Central to the story is Schaap's portrayal of Braddock's unusually tight bond with his manager, Joe Gould, who maintained his belief in the fighter's talent when his career had bottomed out. Upon finishing the book, one might be persuaded to believe that, if not for Gould's integral work behind the scenes, Braddock would have been another on a long list of forgotten pugs.

Meanwhile, Baer's story is admirably woven into the storyline and neatly juxtaposed with Braddock's saga. In Baer, the author gives depth and dimension to a champion known primarily for his outrageous persona and underutilized ring ability. But Schaap sheds light on a conflicted athlete who routinely questioned the profession that brought him fame and riches after Baer's opponent, Frankie Campbell, died from injuries sustained during their bout in 1930. Ultimately, Baer remains true to his enduring reputation as a philanderer and flamboyant showman, but he comes off as a more complex tragicomic figure than simply the clown prince of boxing that has endured as his legacy.

A quickly paced story with a sophisticated but readable narrative, *Cinderella Man* will likely be the best boxing book you'll read this year.

—Paul Salgado

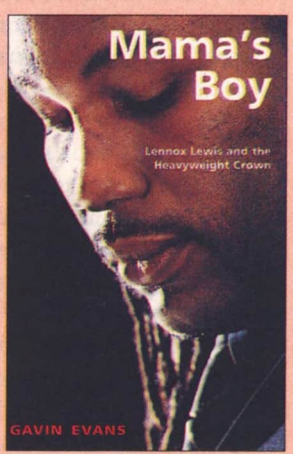
Recently retired heavyweight champion Lennox Lewis has always been a riddle wrapped around an enigma. Having been raised in Jamaica, Canada, and England only added to the confusion surrounding him. British boxing writer Gavin Evans answers most of the questions in his excellent biography, *Mama's Boy: Lennox Lewis And The Heavyweight Crown* (Highdown, 362 pages, hardbound, £18.99).

Evans presents readers with a lucid, in-depth account of Lewis' life. The title refers to the champ's close relationship with his mother, Violet, which along with Lewis' chess-playing and sometimes cerebral approach in the ring made it an uphill climb for him to win over fans and the media.

The above traits, along with Lewis' renowned desire for privacy, also spawned rumors of homosexuality, but as Evans' book details, the fighter was anything but. The author also describes how Lewis had the mental and emotional discipline to ignore virtually every negative statement from the unforgiving press.

Some things are not what they seem, and other things are exactly what they seem; the key is figuring out which is which. Evans does a fine job showing that, with Lewis, what you see is exactly what you get. Granted, nobody's perfect, and Evans writes of several instances where various members of Team Lewis were not always so glowing in their evaluations of the boxer. But after reading Evans' accounts of the constant bickering between Lewis' advisors, it is easy to dismiss those derogatory comments as sour grapes.

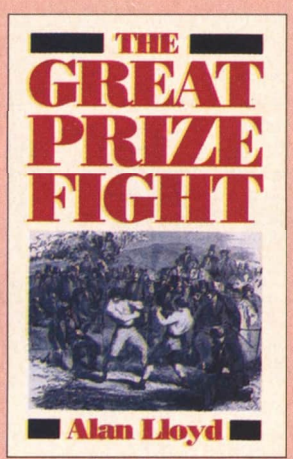
If one is looking for dirt on Lewis worthy of England's *Daily Mirror* tabloid, they will be disappointed; no smoking gun here. Evans deftly reveals through those who know Lewis best that we were deal-



ing with a classy gentleman and boxer whose skills and comportment were a credit to his sport. But for those readers of Evans' solid biography who don't end up appreciating Lennox Lewis more so than before, it will be through no fault of Evans, or Lewis.

—Mike Greenhill

The Great Prize Fight (Souvenir Press, 188 pages, paperback, $14.95), which was originally published in 1977, is back in print, and that's marvelous news for those who enjoy reading about the bare-knuckle era. Written by acclaimed popular historian Alan Lloyd, it is the story of the epic 1860 battle between England's Tom Sayers and American John C. Heenan.



Lloyd has done a meticulous job of research, and weaves together a compelling account of this 19th-century superfight, including all the historical and cultural aspects that made it an international event with ramifications on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. And while the book is obviously centered on the fight itself, it also gives readers a splendid portrait of what society, particularly the sporting life, was like in both Victorian England and mid-19th-century America.

The cast of characters is long, varied, and fascinating, ranging from Francis Dowling, editor of *Bell's Life* (the era's leading sports periodical), to John Morrissey, an unscrupulous ex-pug-turned-saloon-keeper and politician who was among Heenan's backers. Equally interesting are people who played a peripheral part, such as John Gideon, a friend and advisor of Sayers whose role was to find a remote location, fairly close to a railroad line, to serve as the battleground. Prize fighting was illegal in England at the time and had also lost the support of most of the aristocracy, which had originally provided both patronage and protection. Secrecy, therefore, was of the utmost, and when a site was finally settled upon, those who wanted to attend purchased a train ticket that listed no destination.

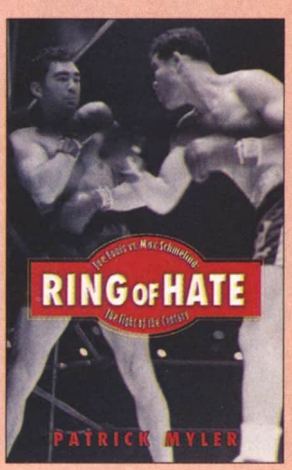
Perhaps the most fascinating thing about both Sayers and Heenan, who were undoubtedly extraordinarily tough and courageous men, was that they were both taken advantage of by women. Adah Isaacs Menken was a young American actress/poet wannabe with far more ambition than talent who, following a fling with Heenan, billed herself Mrs. Heenan in order to cash in on his fame, despite the fact that she was still married to another fellow. Sayers was a classic cuckold, whose wife had several children with another man, and then forced Sayers to support them.

Lloyd masterfully explores all of this and much more in his wonderfully evocative account of a fight of such significance that it divided the British parliament, excited Charles Dickens, and inspired a poem by William Makepeace Thackeray. And when the fight train chugs out of London, picks up steam, and heads to the rustic village of Hampshire, where the bloody two-hour encounter took place, readers will almost feel like they are aboard.

—Nigel Collins

Max Schmeling was in his 90s, the oldest living former world heavyweight champion, when he said that he would like to be remembered as "a good man." When he died at his home in Hollenstedt in February, seven months short of reaching the century mark, the obituaries recalled the turbulent era that he lived through. His encounters with Hitler and Goebbels when Germany was under Nazi rule were retold, as was his love of the countryside, his business acumen, and his devotion to his wife, Anny.

There was poignant reference made to Kristallnacht (Night of Broken Glass) when he took into hiding two young Jewish boys named Lewin and, almost certainly, saved their lives while thousands of Jews were being rounded up and sent to concentration camps. But the central drama Schmeling was inevitably identified with was his ring rivalry with Joe Louis, the cornerstone of Patrick Myler's excellent work in *Ring Of Hate* (256 pages, published in Great Britain by Mainstream, £15.99, and in the U.S. by Arcade, $25.00).



A frequent contributor to THE RING, Myler tells the story of an epic struggle that culminated in a prize fight that allegorized a war, in his distinctively authoritative, flowing narrative. Louis and Schmeling lived lives in which, in Schmeling's own words, they "experienced everything possible, the very best, as well as the worst." The night of June 19, 1936, was certainly his best in boxing, as the aging German ex-champion knocked out Louis, the young, destructive heir-apparent, in the 12th round in Yankee Stadium to resurrect his career. Schmeling returned to his homeland a hero, to Hitler a powerful symbol of Aryan supremacy. But their second engagement in the same ring two years later transcended sport, cementing their names in the history books. As the world stood on the brink of war, Louis' ruthless first-round knockout victory answered President Roosevelt's call: "Joe, we need muscles like yours to beat Germany."

Myler's literary muscle brings together the careers and lives of Louis and Schmeling into a vivid and absorbing portrait, its resonance enhanced by Schmeling's recent passing. The two titans are placed in sporting and historical context and the overwhelmingly human nature of their relationship is faithfully told. Joe and Max became friends from the day of Schmeling's first visit to Louis' Chicago home in 1954, a fitting starting point to Myler's definitive book on the subject of one of boxing's greatest rivalries, which from that day forth was at an end.

—Brian Doogan

TV FIGHTS OF THE MONTH

DATE	WINNER/LOSER	NETWORK	DIVISION	SIGNIFICANCE	MATCHUP	RESULT
4/1/05	Willie Gibbs KO 2 Andres Pacheco	ESPN2	m	C+	D+	D
If we didn't know better we'd have thought that was Ferdie in there, not Andres						
4/1/05	Jhonny Gonzalez KO 4 Trinidad Mendoza	Telef	b	B-	C+	C+
Can someone tell us what Mendoza's corner was waiting for?						
4/1/05	Malcolm Tann KO 2 Leroy Childs	Show	h	C-	B-	B-
We know looks can be deceiving, especially with heavyweights, but Tann looked good here; let's keep an eye on him						
4/1/05	Robert Guerrero KO 12 Adrian Valdez	Show	f	C+	A-	B-
This got interesting whenever Valdez decided to fight back; we're not sold yet on Guerrero						
4/2/05	**Jean-Marc Mormeck W 12 Wayne Braithwaite**	**Show**	**world c**	**A+**	**A**	**B**
Hey, where are all the jokes now about French fighters?						
4/7/05	Andre Ward W DQ 3 Roy Ashworth	FOXSN	sm	C	B-	D+
In a way you've got to respect a guy who knows he can't win and decides to have some fun while losing						
4/7/05	Riddick Bowe W 10 Billy Zumbrun	FOXSN	h	C+	C	C-
Riddick: You might consider giving the Marines another go; this boxing thing isn't really working out						
4/8/05	Jorge Barrios KO 4 Mike Anchondo	ESPN2	jl	B+	A	C+
Barrios a bad hombre, but who was that guy in there with him and what did he do with Mike Anchondo?						
4/9/05	Fernando Montiel KO 7 Ivan Hernandez	PPV	jb	B+	A	B-
You had to know Montiel would be back; he's the most talented guy at 115						
4/9/05	Marco Antonio Barrera KO 2 Mzonke Fana	PPV	jl	B+	F-	C
This should have been aired on the cartoon network; shame on you, HBO						
4/15/05	Andre Dirrell W 6 Carl Cockerham	ESPN2	sm	C+	C+	C-
Hey guys, isn't it a little soon to be calling Dirrell boxing's next star?						
4/15/05	Kingsley Ikeke KO 12 Antwun Echols	ESPN2	m	B-	B	C+
Ever since Tommy Hearns retired we've been waiting for the time we could use the phrase "freakishly tall" again; it's time						
4/15/05	Johnny Tapia W 12 Frankie Archuletta	Telef	f	B	B+	B
If you're looking for the right time to get out, Johnny, this would be it						
4/21/05	Carl Froch KO 8 Henry Porras	HBO-L	sm	C+	C	C+
Wasn't it a little weird watching a Brit on a telecast on which the announcers spoke only Spanish?						
4/21/05	Arturo Morua W 10 Jung Bum Kim	HBO-L	jw	B-	C+	B-
Morua's late strength the difference in good action fight						
4/22/05	Rolando Reyes KO 9 Jose Ojeda	Show	jw	C+	C+	C
This could have been stopped any time after the sixth round; Ojeda wasn't going to win this with a bazooka						
4/22/05	Paul Williams W 10 Terrence Cauthen	Show	w	C+	C+	D+
Who has Cauthen been training with, John Ruiz?						
4/22/05	Dominick Guinn D 10 Friday Ahunanya	ESPN2	h	C+	B+	D-
You can scream all you want, Ronnie, if the guy doesn't want to fight—and Guinn doesn't, not really—you can't make him						
4/23/05	Raul Martinez W 6 Jose Tirado	PPV	b	C	C+	C+
This didn't make up for Diaz-Eber, but Martinez can fight						
4/23/05	Shane Mosley W 10 David Estrada	PPV	w	B+	C+	C+
You can shave your mustache, drop seven pounds, and switch trainers, but when it's gone it's gone						
4/23/05	Calvin Brock W 12 Jameel McCline	PPV	h	B+	B+	B-
Brock not the second coming of Jack Dempsey, but this was good; we'll take it						
4/23/05	Antonio Margarito KO 5 Kermit Cintron	PPV	w	A	A-	C+
My, the welterweights are getting interesting again, aren't they?						
4/23/05	Wladimir Klitschko KO 4 Eliceo Castillo	HBO	h	B-	C+	C+
Castillo couldn't have made this any easier for Klitschko had he come in with his hands tied behind his back						

Category Explanation: "Significance"—The importance of the bout to the division and the fighters' futures; "Matchup"—The quality of the fighters and the prefight determination of how their styles will mesh; "Result"—How the bout turned out, from the viewer's perspective.

(RING championship fights in **bold** type)

Division key: h—heavyweight; c—cruiserweight; lh—light heavyweight; sm—super middleweight; m—middleweight; jm—junior middleweight; w—welterweight; jw—junior welterweight; l—lightweight; jl—junior lightweight; f—featherweight; jf—junior featherweight; b—bantamweight; jb—junior bantamweight; fl—flyweight; jfl—junior flyweight; s—strawweight

Network key: PPV—Pay-Per-View; Show—Showtime; FOXSN—Fox Sports Net; Uni—Univision; Telef—Telefutura; Telem—Telemundo; HBO L—HBO Latino

NEW GRAVE FOR GAVILAN

When Hall of Famer Kid Gavilan died two years ago, he was buried in a common, unmarked grave at Our Lady of Mercy Cemetery in West Miami. That never sat well with members of Ring 8, the New York Veteran Boxers Association. So the club raised $10,000 to purchase a new burial plot and had the body exhumed. On April 2, a new headstone, one befitting a champion, was unveiled at Our Lady of Mercy.

"This was something we needed to do," said Ring 8 Treasurer Tony Mazzarella. "The Kid deserved better. When Mike Tyson found out what we were doing, he sent $5,000."

Three of Gavilan's children—Gerardo Gonzalez Jr., Demi Gonzalez, and Helen Gonzalez—sat near the headstone during the ceremony. "This is truly an honor, our family appreciates it very much," said Demi.

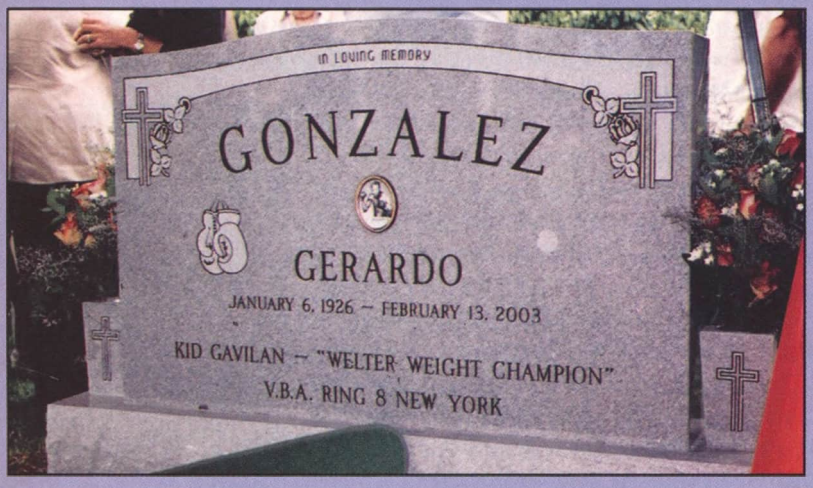
Among the fighters who attended were former lightweight titleholder Ray Mancini, Gavilan opponent Joe Miceli, former NABF junior lightweight champion Frankie Otero, former flyweight titlist Prudencio Cardona, Bill Tate, Bobby Bartels, and Henny Wallitsch. Ring 8 arrived with a 15-member contingent from New York, including Mazzarella, promoter Bob Duffy, cornerman Charlie Capone, and author Ron Ross. Historian Hank Kaplan was also in attendance and addressed the gathering.

The most emotional part of the ceremony came when Wallitsch, Ring 8's president, broke down during his remarks. "The Hawk has risen and we know he's looking down on us, never to be forgotten," Wallitsch said, his voice cracking. "We didn't forget you, Kid."

—Robert Cassidy

PHOTOS BY ROBERT CASSIDY

Ray Mancini (seated) was among the gathering when Kid Gavilan's new headstone was unveiled



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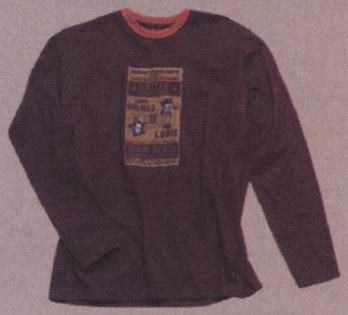

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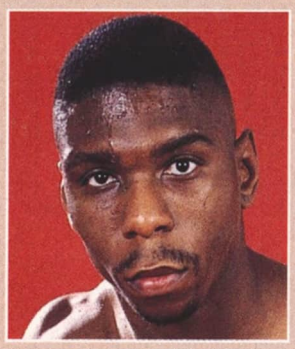
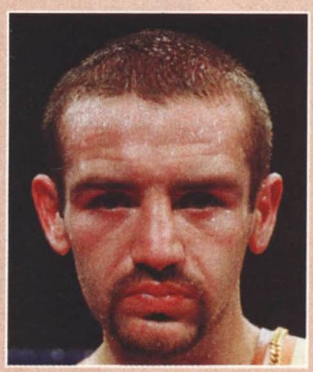
OUTSIDE THE ROPES



Brewer: Hangs up his gloves

In April, the United States Court of Appeals upheld promoter **Lou DiBella**'s original $610,000 libel judgment against middleweight champion **Bernard Hopkins**, but rejected appeals from both parties. DiBella wanted more money, claiming Hopkins was guilty of additional libelous statement, while Hopkins had cross-appealed, asking for a reversal. Later the same week, it was announced that an investor group led by DiBella had purchased the Northwich (Connecticut) Navigators, a Double-A baseball team affiliated with the San Francisco Giants. DiBella promised changes for the upcoming season, most importantly, an increased community presence ... Former IBF super middleweight titleholder **Charles "The Hatchet" Brewer**, 35, announced his retirement a few days after his 10th-round TKO loss to **Lolenga Mack** on April 15 in Copenhagen, Demark. Brewer told Ron Heard of badboysboxing.com, "My body's telling me it is time to quit." Brewer, known for his crowd-pleasing, give-and-take style, turned pro in August 1989 and won the vacant IBF 168-pound belt on December 2, 1997, with a fifth-round TKO of **Gary Ballard**. The Philadelphian made three successful defenses, including a 12-round decision over **Joey De Grandis** in December '97, which is still the only title fight ever held at the Blue Horizon, the famous Philly venue where Brewer fought many of his bouts. Brewer lost the title to **Sven Ottke** on October 24, 1998, via split decision, and failed to regain the title in a September 2000 rematch. "Charles was a hard worker who had tremendous belief in himself," said Hall of Fame promoter **J Russell Peltz**, who guided Brewer, 40-11(28), throughout most of his career. "It's a shame he never got to fight on HBO, because he was never in a bad fight" ... The Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies recognized **Muhammad Ali** for a lifetime of promoting justice and humanitarian causes by presenting him with the Louis E. Martin Great American Award. The center praised Ali for "speaking truth to all Americans about Muslims, for devoting himself to the vulnerable, the needy, and those without advocates" ... **Erica Smith-Taylor**, the wife of middleweight contender **Jermain Taylor**, was drafted by the Washington Mystics of the WNBA. Smith-Taylor, a 5'11" guard from Louisiana Tech, was the 19th overall pick in the draft ... In late-April, former WBA heavyweight titleholder **Greg Page** returned home following a two-month stay in the hospital. Page, who suffered a traumatic brain injury in a 2001 bout with **Dale Crowe**, had been hospitalized in February with pneumonia and other complications ... According to *The Washington Post,* D.C. Mayor **Anthony A. Williams** has decided not to reappoint Commission Vice Chairman **Michael A. Brown**. The move came shortly after Brown announced that **Mike Tyson** would box at the MCI Center on June 11. The day after Brown made several TV and radio appearances touting the Tyson fight as a boost to the local economy, the city's director of the mayor's Office of Boards and Commissions sent Brown a letter saying that his term was "officially concluded." *The Post* quoted Brown as accusing Mayor Williams of "playing politics" with his appointment because Brown is considering a run for mayor in 2006 ... **Barbara C. Peek**, 49, executive vice president of the Blue Horizon, died of undisclosed causes on April 11. "It's a sad day for boxing," said Philadelphia welterweight **Anthony "The Messenger" Thompson**. "Every time I saw her she'd wrap me up in a big hug and make me feel like I was a special person" ... According to edinburghnews.com, featherweight contender **Scott Harrison**, 27, has been banned from every drinking establishment in East Kilbride, Lanarkshire, following a series of incidents. The ban, imposed under the local Pubwatch scheme, will prevent the boxer from entering any pub, nightclub, or hotel in the town center for six months because his behavior "fell below acceptable standards." Last year, Harrison was acquitted of beating up a man in a pub toilet, but in March 2005, he was convicted of resisting arrest after an argument with a cab driver ... Former Japanese 115-pound titleholder **Seiji Tanaka**, 28, died on April 15 as the result of a brain injury suffered during a 10th-round TKO loss to **Nobuo Nashiro** on April 3 in Osaka. Despite receiving prompt medical attention, Tanaka, 16-7-3 (4), never regained consciousness after passing out in his dressing room following the fight ... Amateur flyweight **Greg Cuyler**, 23, was shot to death in Hartford, Connecticut, on April 10.

Smith-Taylor: Drafted by the WNBA



Harrison: Banned from pubs

THE PUNCHLINES

"They say I'm another Peter McNeeley, but he was only part Irish. I'm all Irish."

—Kevin McBride, disagreeing with comparisons between him and former Mike Tyson victim McNeeley

"Life is precious. It's a journey, and boxing is just one way. You've got to finish the journey for your family and yourself. If you can't do it through boxing, do it another way."

—Vassiliy Jirov, giving advice to former opponent Joe Mesi, who had his boxing license revoked after suffering a brain bleed in their March 2004 bout

The RING®
"THE BIBLE OF BOXING"

RATINGS ANALYSIS

(For period ended May 11, 2005)

POUND-FOR-POUND

1. **BERNARD HOPKINS**
   Middleweight
2. **FLOYD MAYWEATHER**
   Junior Welterweight
3. **KOSTYA TSZYU**
   Junior Welterweight
4. **WINKY WRIGHT**
   Junior Middleweight
5. **MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA**
   Junior Lightweight
6. **ERIK MORALES**
   Junior Lightweight
7. **MANNY PACQUIAO**
   Featherweight
8. **JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ**
   Featherweight
9. **DIEGO CORRALES**
   Lightweight
10. **GLEN JOHNSON**
    Light Heavyweight

HEAVYWEIGHTS: Calvin Brock debuts at number seven after defeating Jameel McCline (eighth last issue). McCline exits. Fres Oquenso (seventh last issue) falls to ninth due to inactivity, which allows Lamon Brewster to advance from ninth to eighth.

CRUISERWEIGHTS: Jean-Marc Mormeck (second last issue) becomes the first world cruiserweight champion under THE RING's championship policy by beating Wayne Braithwaite, who retains the number-one position. Everybody rated below second in the last issue advances one spot each, while Alexander Gurov returns at 10.

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS: No changes.

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS: Antwun Echols (seventh last issue) departs to campaign at middleweight. Echols' exit pushed everybody below him last issue up one rung, and makes room for Otis Grant at 10.

MIDDLEWEIGHTS: Kingsley Ikeke moves from eighth to sixth following his win over Echols, which pushed down Robert Allen (sixth last issue) and Maselino Masoe (seventh last issue) one slot each.

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS: Shane Mosley (second last issue) is gone because he has returned to the welterweight division. Mosley's departure allows Verno Phillips, Daniel Santos, Travis Simms, Javier Castillejo, Rodney Jones, Kofi Jantuah, and Alejandro Garcia to move up one spot each. Bronco McKart (ninth last issue) departs. Newcomers Sergei Dzindziruk and Sergio Martinez debut at nine and 10, respectively.

WELTERWEIGHTS: Mosley's win over ninth-rated David Estrada and his earlier accomplishment at 147 pounds puts him at number three. Mosley's return shoved down Thomas Damgaard from third to fourth. Manuel Gomez (fourth last issue) exits due to the fact he hasn't made the division limit in some time and he drew with club fighter Jesus Soto Karaas in his most recent start. Jawaid Khaliq (sixth last issue) and Carlos Baldomir (seventh last issue) are gone because they have not fought in more than a year. Kermit Cintron (fifth last issue) tumbles to seventh following TKO to Antonio Margarito. Comse Rivera advances from eighth to fifth due to the departures, and Luis Collazo debuts at sixth thanks to his win over eighth-ranked Jose Antonio Rivera. Finally, Sebastian Lujan is new at number 10.

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS: No changes.

LIGHTWEIGHTS: Diego Corrales (first last issue) is the new world champion thanks to his TKO of Jose Luis Castillo, who is now number one.

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS: Previously unranked Vincente Mosquera is aboard at number four after beating Yodsanan Nanthachai, who slips from fourth to fifth. Mosquera's debut also pushes down Carlos Hernandez, Jorge Barrios, and Cassius Baloy one slot each. Mike Achondo (eighth last issue) is gone following his loss to Barrios, as is Mzonke Fana (10th last issue) after his loss to Marco Antonio Barrera.

FEATHERWEIGHTS: Chris John (eighth last issue) trades places with Michael Brodie (seventh last issue) due to John's win over Derrick Gainer.

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS: Cellestino Caballero jumps from ninth to sixth thanks to his win over Jose Luis Valbueno, who slides from fifth to ninth. Meanwhile, Ricardo Cordoba advances from eighth to fifth, and Yoddamrong Sithyodthong falls from sixth to eighth.

BANTAMWEIGHTS: No changes.

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS: No changes.

FLYWEIGHTS: No changes.

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS: Roberto Vasquez climbs from ninth to second on the strength of his kayo of Beibis Mendoza, who plunges from second to 10th. Hugo Cazares enters at third after beating Nelson Dieppa, who falls from third to fifth. Cazares' debut pushed down everybody rated fifth or below last issue a rung, while Shingo Yamaguchi (10th last issue) exits.

STRAWWEIGHTS: No changes.

POUND-FOR-POUND: Corrales replaces Castillo at number nine. ■

THE RING RATINGS

For Period Ended May 11, 2005

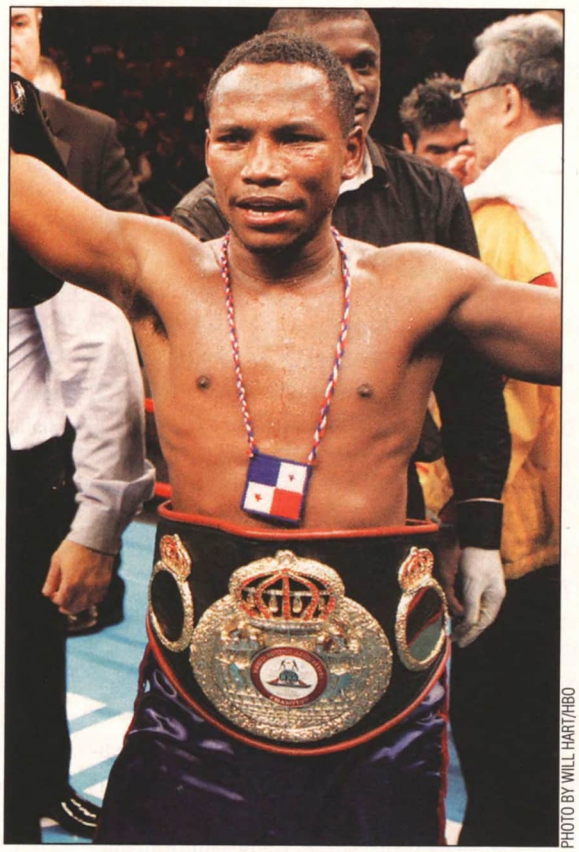


PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Vincente Mosquera smashed into the junior lightweight rankings with a stirring victory over Yodsanan Nanthachai

How Our Ratings Are Compiled

Fighters recognized as champions by THE RING are rated at the top of their division, with the top 10 contenders listed below.

Championship vacancies can be filled by winning a box-off between THE RING'S number-one and number-two contenders, or, in certain instances, a box-off between our number-one and number-three contenders.

The only three occasions when a fighter will lose his championship status are when he retires, moves to another weight division, or is defeated in a championship bout.

Ratings By The Editors

HEAVYWEIGHTS
Weight Unlimited

Champ: VITALI KLITSCHKO
Ukraine 35-2 (34)

1. **CHRIS BYRD**
Flint, MI 38-2-1 (20)
2. **JOHN RUIZ**
Methuen, MA 41-5-1 (28)
3. **HASIM RAHMAN**
Baltimore, MD 40-5-1 (33)
4. **JAMES TONEY**
Ann Arbor, MI 68-4-2 (43)
5. **MONTE BARRETT**
Queens, NY 31-3 (17)
6. **ANDREW GOLOTA**
Poland 38-5-1 (31)
7. **CALVIN BROCK**
Charlotte, NC 25-0 (20)
8. **LAMON BREWSTER**
Los Angeles, CA 31-2 (27)
9. **FRES OQUENDO**
Puerto Rico 24-3 (15)
10. **SAMUEL PETER**
Las Vegas, NV 23-0 (20)

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 154 pounds

Champ: WINKY WRIGHT
St. Petersburg, FL 48-3 (25)

1. **KASSIM OUMA**
W. Palm Beach, FL 21-1-1 (13)
2. **VERNO PHILLIPS**
Aurora, CO 38-9-1 (20)
3. **DANIEL SANTOS**
Puerto Rico 29-2-1 (20)
4. **TRAVIS SIMMS**
Norwalk, CT 24-0 (18)
5. **JAVIER CASTILLEJO**
Spain 58-5 (40)
6. **RODNEY JONES**
Lafayette, LA 35-3 (22)
7. **KOFI JANTUAH**
Las Vegas, NV 28-2 (18)
8. **ALEJANDRO GARCIA**
Mexico 28-1 (28)
9. **SERGEI DZINDZIRUK**
Germany 30-0 (21)
10. **SERGIO MARTINEZ**
Spain 33-1-1 (15)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 126 pounds

Champ: MANNY PACQUIAO
Philippines 39-3-2 (30)

1. **JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ**
Mexico 44-2-1 (33)
2. **INJIN CHI**
South Korea 30-2-1 (18)
3. **ROCKY JUAREZ**
Houston, TX 23-0 (16)
4. **SCOTT HARRISON**
Scotland 23-2-2 (13)
5. **VICTOR POLO**
Colombia 34-5-3 (24)
6. **MANUEL MEDINA**
Mexico 63-14 (29)
7. **CHRIS JOHN**
Indonesia 35-0-1 (19)
8. **MICHAEL BRODIE**
England 35-2-1 (23)
9. **SPEND ABAZI**
Denmark 31-1 (10)
10. **NICKY COOK**
England 24-0 (14)

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 122 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **OSCAR LARIOS**
Mexico 55-3-1 (35)
2. **MAHYAR MONSHIPOUR**
France 26-2-2 (17)
3. **ISRAEL VAZQUEZ**
Mexico 37-3 (28)
4. **JOAN GUZMAN**
Dominican Republic 23-0 (17)
5. **RICARDO CORDOBA**
Panama 24-0 (17)
6. **CELESTINO CABALLERO**
Panama 22-2 (16)
7. **WAYNE McCULLOUGH**
Las Vegas, NV 27-5 (18)
8. **YODDAMRONG SITHYODTHONG**
Thailand 41-2-1 (18)
9. **JOSE LUIS VALBUENA**
Venezuela 24-4-1 (14)
10. **SERGIO MANUEL MEDINA**
Argentina 21-0 (12)

BANTAMWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 118 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **RAFAEL MARQUEZ**
Mexico 33-3 (30)
2. **HOZUMI HASEGAWA**
Japan 18-2 (5)
3. **VEERAPOL SAHAPROM**
Thailand 47-2-2 (33)
4. **RATANACHAI VORAPIN**
Thailand 60-8 (40)
5. **CRUZ CARVAJAL**
Mexico 25-12-1 (21)
6. **GENARO GARCIA**
Mexico 32-4 (20)
7. **TOSHIAKI NISHIOKA**
Japan 24-4-3 (14)
8. **SILENCE MABUZA**
South Africa 17-0 (15)
9. **RICARDO VARGAS**
Mexico 36-10-3 (11)
10. **JHONNY GONZALEZ**
Mexico 28-4 (25)

CRUISERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 200 pounds

Champ: JEAN-MARC MORMECK
France 31-2 (21)

1. **WAYNE BRAITHWAITE**
Guyana 21-1 (17)
2. **JOHNNY NELSON**
England 44-12-2 (29)
3. **O'NEIL BELL**
Atlanta, GA 23-1-1 (22)
4. **KELVIN DAVIS**
Reno, NV 21-2-1 (16)
5. **CARL THOMPSON**
England 33-6 (25)
6. **STEVE CUNNINGHAM**
Philadelphia, PA 17-0 (9)
7. **DALE BROWN**
Canada 33-3-1 (21)
8. **VIRGIL HILL**
Bismarck, ND 49-5 (23)
9. **PIETRO AURINO**
Italy 31-2 (14)
10. **ALEXANDER GUROV**
Ukrain 37-4-1 (32)

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 175 pounds

Champ: GLEN JOHNSON
Miami, FL 42-9-2 (28)

1. **ANTONIO TARVER**
Orlando, FL 22-3 (18)
2. **ZSOLT ERDEI**
Hungary 22-0 (13)
3. **ROY JONES**
Pensacola, FL 49-3 (38)
4. **JULIO GONZALEZ**
Huntington Beach, CA 38-2 (23)
5. **FABRICE TIOZZO**
France 47-2 (31)
6. **CLINTON WOODS**
England 37-3-1 (23)
7. **PAUL BRIGGS**
Australia 23-1 (17)
8. **THOMAS ULRICH**
Germany 27-1 (19)
9. **MONTELL GRIFFIN**
Chicago, IL 47-6 (30)
10. **ERIC HARDING**
West Hartford, CT 22-3-1 (7)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 168 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **JOE CALZAGHE**
Wales 39-0 (31)
2. **MIKKEL KESSLER**
Denmark 35-0 (27)
3. **ANTHONY MUNDINE**
Australia 23-2 (18)
4. **MARKUS BEYER**
Germany 32-2 (12)
5. **JEFF LACY**
St. Petersburg, FL 19-0 (15)
6. **DANNY GREEN**
Australia 19-2 (18)
7. **MADS LARSEN**
Denmark 45-2 (37)
8. **ROBIN REID**
England 38-4-1 (27)
9. **MANNY SIACA**
Puerto Rico 18-5 (16)
10. **OTIS GRANT**
Canada 36-2-1 (17)

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 160 pounds

Champ: BERNARD HOPKINS
Philadelphia, PA 46-2-1 (32)

1. **FELIX STURM**
Germany 23-1 (11)
2. **HOWARD EASTMAN**
England 40-2 (35)
3. **OSCAR DE LA HOYA**
Los Angeles, CA 37-4 (29)
4. **FELIX TRINIDAD**
Puerto Rico 42-1 (35)
5. **JERMAIN TAYLOR**
Little Rock, AR 23-0 (17)
6. **KINGSLEY IKEKE**
Canada 23-1 (13)
7. **ROBERT ALLEN**
Atlanta, GA 36-5 (27)
8. **MASELINO MASOE**
New Zealand 26-2 (25)
9. **SAM SOLIMAN**
Australia 30-7 (12)
10. **ARTHUR ABRAHAM**
Germany 15-0 (14)

WELTERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 147 pounds

Champ: ZAB JUDAH
Brooklyn, NY 33-2 (24)

1. **ANTONIO MARGARITO**
Mexico 32-4 (23)
2. **CORY SPINKS**
St. Louis, MO 34-3 (11)
3. **SHANE MOSLEY**
Pomona, CA 40-4 (35)
4. **THOMAS DAMGAARD**
Denmark 35-0 (27)
5. **COSME RIVERA**
Los Angeles, CA 27-7-2 (19)
6. **LUIS COLLAZO**
Queens, NY 25-1 (11)
7. **KERMIT CINTRON**
Reading, PA 24-1 (22)
8. **JOSE ANTONIO RIVERA**
Worcester, MA 37-4-1(24)
9. **DAVID ESTRADA**
Chicago, IL 18-2 (9)
10. **SEBASTIAN LUJAN**
Argentina 22-2-1 (14)

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 140 pounds

Champ: KOSTYA TSZYU
Australia 31-1 (25)

1. **ARTURO GATTI**
Jersey City, NJ 39-6 (30)
2. **VIVIAN HARRIS**
Brooklyn, NY 25-1-1 (17)
3. **FLOYD MAYWEATHER**
Grand Rapids, MI 33-0 (22)
4. **MIGUEL COTTO**
Puerto Rico 23-0 (19)
5. **SHARMBA MITCHELL**
Washington, D.C. 55-4 (31)
6. **RICKY HATTON**
England 38-0 (28)
7. **JUNIOR WITTER**
England 31-1-2 (19)
8. **DeMARCUS CORLEY**
Washington, D.C. 29-4-1 (16)
9. **LOVEMORE NDOU**
Australia 40-8-1 (26)
10. **OKTAY URKAL**
Germany 34-3 (10)

LIGHTWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 135 pounds

Champ: DIEGO CORRALES
Las Vegas, NV 40-2 (33)

1. **JOSE LUIS CASTILLO**
Mexico 52-7-1 (46)
2. **JOEL CASAMAYOR**
Miami, FL 31-3 (19)
3. **JUAN LAZCANO**
El Paso, TX 33-3-1 (25)
4. **JUAN DIAZ**
Houston, TX 27-0 (13)
5. **JULIO DIAZ**
Coachella, CA 30-3 (22)
6. **ACELINO FREITAS**
Brazil 36-1 (31)
7. **JAVIER JAUREGUI**
Mexico 49-11-2 (34)
8. **ARTUR GRIGORIAN**
Uzbekistan 37-1 (23)
9. **JULIEN LORCY**
France 56-4-2 (41)
10. **LAKVA SIM**
Mongolia 19-4-1 (16)

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 130 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA**
Mexico 60-4 (42)
2. **ERIK MORALES**
Mexico 48-2 (34)
3. **JESUS CHAVEZ**
Mexico 40-3 (28)
4. **VICENTE MOSQUERA**
Mexico 40-3 (28)
5. **YODSANAN NANTHACHAI**
Thailand 43-3-1 (25)
6. **CARLOS HERNANDEZ**
Bellflower, CA 41-4-1 (24)
7. **JORGE BARRIOS**
Argentina 43-2-1 (31)
8. **CASSIUS BALOYI**
South Africa 31-1 (16)
9. **ROBBIE PEDEN**
Australia 25-2 (14)
10. **NOBUHITO HONMO**
Japan 26-4-2 (5)

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 115 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **MARTIN CASTILLO**
Mexico 28-1 (16)
2. **KATSUSHIGE KAWASHIMA**
Japan 28-3 (18)
3. **LUIS PEREZ**
Nicaragua 23-1 (15)
4. **FERNANDO MONTIEL**
Mexico 30-1-1 (24)
5. **ALEXANDER MUNOZ**
Venezuela 26-1 (25)
6. **JOSE NAVARRO**
Los Angeles, CA 21-1 (9)
7. **MASAMORI TOKUYAMA**
North Korea 30-3-1 (8)
8. **IVAN HERNANDEZ**
Mexico 20-1-1 (13)
9. **MARK JOHNSON**
Washington, D.C. 44-4 (28)
10. **ERIC MOREL**
Madison, WI 35-2 (18)

FLYWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 112 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **PONGSAKLEK WONJONGKAM**
Thailand 55-2 (29)
2. **LORENZO PARRA**
Venezuela 25-0 (17)
3. **VIC DARCHINYAN**
Australia 23-0 (18)
4. **IRENE PACHECO**
Colombia 29-1 (22)
5. **OMAR NARVAEZ**
Argentina 18-0-2 (12)
6. **JORGE ARCE**
Mexico 39-3-1 (29)
7. **ROSENDO ALVAREZ**
Nicaragua 34-2-2 (22)
8. **BRAHIM ASLOUM**
France 17-0 (6)
9. **TAKEFUMI SAKATA**
Japan 22-2-1 (9)
10. **HUSSEIN HUSSEIN**
Australia 27-2 (21)

JR. FLYWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 108 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **VICTOR BURGOS**
Mexico 37-13-3 (22)
2. **ROBERTO VASQUEZ**
Panama 19-1 (16)
3. **HUGO CAZARES**
Mexico 20-3-1 (14)
4. **PICHIT SIRIWAT**
Thailand 30-2 (14)
5. **NELSON DIEPPA**
Puerto Rico 22-2-2 (13)
6. **ERIC ORTIZ**
Mexico 24-4-1 (16)
7. **ULISES SOLIS**
Mexico 15-1 (11)
8. **JOSE AGUIRRE**
Mexico 33-3-1 (20)
9. **KERMIN GUARDIA**
Colombia 35-4 (21)
10. **BEIBIS MENDOZA**
Colombia 29-4 (23)

STRAWWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 105 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **YUTAKA NIIDA**
Japan 18-1-3 (8)
2. **MUHAMMAD RACHMAN**
Indonesia 49-7-4 (21)
3. **IVAN CALDERON**
Puerto Rico 22-0 (5)
4. **KATSUNARI TAKAYAMA**
Japan 15-1 (7)
5. **ISAAC BUSTOS**
Mexico 24-7-3 (13)
6. **EAGLE KYOWA**
Japan 13-1 (5)
7. **JUAN LANDAETA**
Venezuela 15-3-1 (13)
8. **OMAR SOTO**
Mexico 14-2-1 (10)
9. **DANIEL REYES**
Colombia 34-3-1 (29)
10. **RODEL MAYOL**
Philippines 21-0 (16)

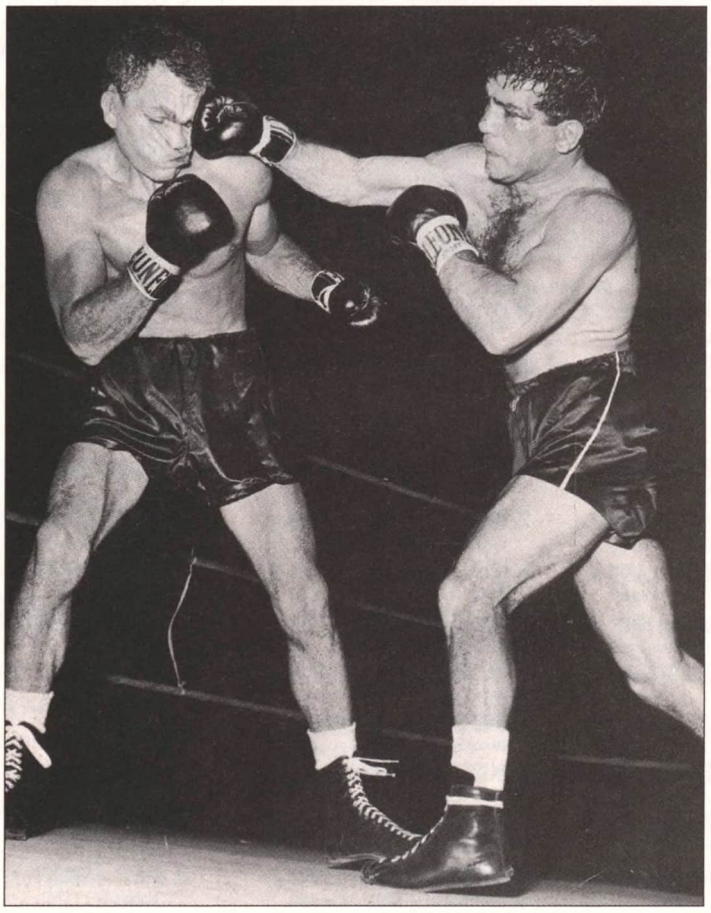
RYAN OUT LOUD

By Jeff Ryan

FAME AND (IN ONE CASE, GOOD) FORTUNE

The annual announcement of who has been voted into a particular sport's hall of fame is usually a moment of great anticipation and excitement for me, but in the last several months, the various calls to the halls have left me scratching my head worse than an psoriasis sufferer whose wise guy college roommate snuck liquefied itching powder into his bottle of Head & Shoulders shampoo.

This year, the Baseball Writers Association of America elected Wade Boggs and Ryne Sandberg, but did its usual passing over of Jim Rice, Goose Gossage, and Bruce Sutter. Worse, the Veterans Committee didn't vote in anyone. The Pro Football Hall of Fame's panel again denied Bob Hayes, whose pass-catching ability forced the advent of many zone defenses. And in April, the honors committee that chooses members for the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame didn't vote in a single NBA player, not even Adrian Dantley, the 18th-highest scorer of all-time.



Loi drills fellow Hall of Famer Carlos Ortiz with a right

That's some baffling decision-making, to put it nicely. Not to be outdone, though, the International Boxing Hall of Fame got all goofy on us this year, too, not by keeping the door bolted but by throwing it open to everybody but the head taco vendor who set up in the parking lot during the heyday of the Olympic Auditorium. (He's considered a lock next year in the "Non-Participant" category.) No less than 15 fighters, writers, managers, promoters, and film collectors received the Sweet Science's highest honor.

As in previous columns on IBHOF enshrinees, my critique will be confined to participants who are from my era. Eugene Criqui, Joe Lynch, and the rest of the "Old-Timers" or "Pioneers" were doing their best work before even my parents were even born. And debating the merits of the "Non-Participants" and "Observers" is about as exciting as Lynch's 57 career no-decisions. (It's doubtful that two guys are brawling on the floor of a sports bar at this very moment because one of them had the nerve to say Harry Mullan was a better editor than Bert Sugar.) That leaves Duilio Loi, Bobby Chacon, Terry Norris, and Barry McGuigan as my food for thought.

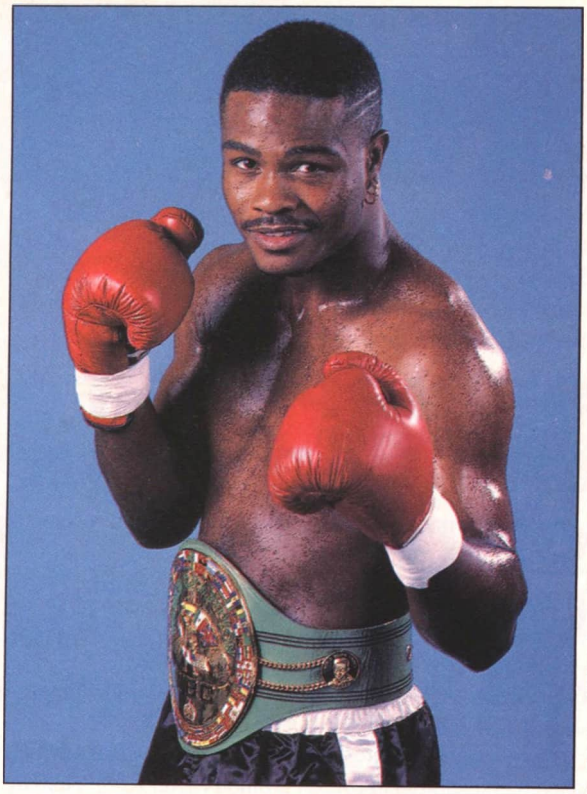
Let's take them one by one:

Duilio Loi: Okay, so maybe it's a stretch to say that he was a fighter from my era, but he did compete during my lifetime, so he's included here. It's hard to argue against a guy who went 115-3-8 (26), was never kayoed, and suffered one of those three

defeats via split decision. Geez, the outcome of a Harlem Globetrotters game, a Hulk Hogan title defense, or a roller derby match race have never been as assured as that of a Loi fight.

The Italian southpaw won the crown for the first time with a decision over future Hall of Famer Carlos Ortiz in 1960, made a defense against Ortiz, lost the crown on points to Eddie Perkins in September '62, but then rebounded to outpoint Perkins three months later and retire as champion. As Loi's paltry knockout percentage attests, he was no thrilling assassin. And he was too much of a homebody, having fought 113 of his 126 battles in his native Italy. But to paraphrase former two-division titlist Vinny Paz, 115 wins are 115 wins, no matter if Loi fought his mother 115 times.

Bobby Chacon: No doubt "The Schoolboy" was considered a borderline candidate in the minds of many, but his selection gets my nod of approval because he made a habit of overcoming personal tragedy (including the suicide of his wife, Valorie, who'd tried in vain to get him to retire), seemingly insurmountable obstacles in battle, and every handicap from weight problems to skin that could be cut by the sharp inflections in the referee's voice during the prefight instructions.



Ryan approves of Norris' enshrinement

Chacon, who went 59-7-1 (47), hit hard, fought with a crowd-pleasing style, and had a flair for high drama. After knocking out Danny "Little Red" Lopez, who entered their showdown at 23-0 (22), Chacon won the vacant WBC featherweight crown with a stoppage of Alfredo Marcano in '74. After a successful defense, Chacon was dethroned by the great Ruben Olivares in '75, the second kayo loss he'd suffer to the Mexican legend. (Chacon would later outpoint Olivares in their third meeting.) The Schoolboy was ahead on the cards when Alexis Arguello stopped him on cuts in seven rounds in '79, but appeared ready for recess when Cornelius Boza-Edwards beat him in '81.

It was in what was supposed to be his career twilight, however, that Chacon notched his two most memorable wins, both named THE RING's Fight of the Year. First, he got off the deck twice to outpoint Bazooka Limon for the WBC super featherweight belt in '82. Then, Chacon rallied again to win a bloodbath with Boza-Edwards and retain the title in '83. Chacon was halted by the bigger Ray Mancini in an '84 crack at the lightweight throne, but knocked out another former world champion, Art Frias, in '85 and finished his career with seven straight victories.

Oddly, the older he got, the more Chacon was capable of absorbing terrific punishment and coming back just when you thought he couldn't. He was, in many ways, a lighter-weight Matthew Saad Muhammad. With the exception of that phone call he got from the IBHOF in January, a warrior like The Schoolboy can't be given a greater compliment.

Terry Norris: A worthy choice. By the time he was 22, Norris had dropped a decision to Derrick Kelly, been disqualified against Joe Walker, and been plastered in two rounds by Julian Jackson. Then "Terrible" Terry took a career that was heading down a path of disappointment and sent it hurtling up a super highway to Canastota.

Norris finished his 12-year career at 47-9 (31), having beaten 16 opponents who held a version of the world title and enjoyed three reigns himself at 154 pounds. He stopped Steve Little, John Mugabi, Donald Curry, Carl Daniels, Meldrick Taylor, and Maurice Blocker, and decisioned Buster Drayton, Rene Jacquot, Paul Vaden, and Simon Brown (rebounding from a knockout loss to Brown a year earlier). Of course, Norris' most notable victory came when he dropped and outpointed Sugar Ray Leonard in Madison Square Garden in '91. It was only the second loss of Leonard's career.

There are some justifiable criticisms of Norris. Three DQ defeats (two against the same foe, Luis Santana) don't look good for a Hall of Famer. And many of the marquee names he thrashed were on the downside. But his resume still sparkles because of its sheer volume. And to think that this was a kid who was a baseball star before he ever boxed. Had he hit with his bat the way he did with his fists, he might have been making a speech in a different hallowed hall in Upstate New York.

Barry McGuigan: The Irishman's election is a perfect example of why the IBHOF has to scrap its absurd insistence that four fighters from the "Modern" category be inducted every year. McGuigan was a compelling human-interest story at the peak of his eight-year career, a nice-guy Catholic who married a Protestant, urged the feuding factions in Northern Ireland to "leave the fighting to Barry," built muscles by hauling sacks of potatoes on his back, and had his dad serenade him with a tear-jerking rendition of "Danny Boy" in the ring before the bell. But "The Clones Cyclone" was no ring immortal.

McGuigan posted a record of 32-3 (28), had just four significant wins, and made only two successful defenses of the WBA featherweight title he won when he ended Eusebio Pedroza's reign of seven years and 19 successful title defenses by flooring and decisioning the Panamanian in 1985. After retaining his crown with a stoppage of a previously unbeaten but strangely reluctant Bernard Taylor and a knockout of Danilo Cabrera, McGuigan was overcome by the Las Vegas heat and Stevie Cruz in '86. The drained McGuigan hit the deck and barely survived until the final bell, losing the belt.

McGuigan would fight just four more times before retiring. His decision over former WBC featherweight king Juan LaPorte, and wins against Pedroza, Taylor, and Cabrera all came within a year, an extremely short peak even by boxing standards, and certainly not hall-worthy. ■

DIGGING DEEP

By Ivan Goldman

STRIPPING FOR DOLLARS: WHY OPTIONS STINK AND OTHER SORRY TALES

There's never a dull moment at IBF headquarters in New Jersey. The boys over there seem to yank somebody's title every other week.

Under its president, Marian Muhammad, the Ma Barker of alphabet gangs, the IBF has taken on an additional role as promoter Don King's hammer. Cruiser Kelvin Davis signed a three-year contract with King to get a shot at the vacant IBF title, which he won in a May 2004 bout against Ezra Sellers. But when he balked at King's demands, the IBF stripped him. How is it that Davis had to go through King to get at an IBF title in the first place?

The Association of Boxing Commissions composed the Boxers' Bill of Rights by de-jargoning language from the Professional Boxing Safety Act of 1996 and the Muhammad Ali Act of 2000. Article Ten instructs fighters, "You are not required to hire any individual in order to obtain a bout."

King routinely dangles title bouts in front of fighters to lure them under his Dracula cape. When's the last time he was reined in by Article Ten? It would be lovely to get a real answer from King himself, but like so many fight writers, I've learned never to ask him anything. Even if you reach him on the phone, you get to ask only one question. He'll still be talking when you eventually hang up without an answer.

Instead, I called promoter and ex-New Jersey commissioner Gary Shaw, whose fighter Diego "Chico" Corrales signed an options clause with Philadelphia-based Artie Pelullo in order to get his fight with then-WBO titlist Acelino Freitas last August. Pelullo, who subsequently owned a piece of Corrales' career, was instrumental in wrecking negotiations for Corrales to fight THE RING lightweight champ Jose Luis Castillo in March. Julio Diaz, who fought Castillo instead and was stopped in round 10, naturally was stripped by the strip-crazed IBF for accepting the unification bout. As of this writing, Castillo-Corrales was supposed to happen May 7 in Las Vegas.

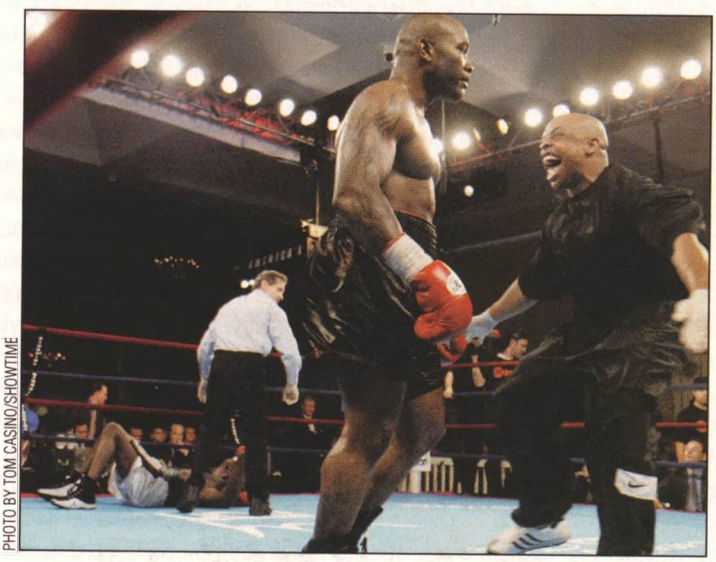


PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Why was Davis stripped of the IBF cruiser belt he won by kayoing Sellers?

Signing a deal with Pelullo, Shaw said, "was the cost of the opportunity. Corrales wanted Freitas. He wanted the opportunity to fight him and get his belt." Sure, but what about Article Ten? Somehow I detected Shaw shaking his head, as if to say, *Are you kidding?*

Who could blame him? I never heard of anybody anywhere trying to enforce it. Had Corrales wanted to try, he might have appealed to—get this—the tribal commission of the Foxwoods Resort in Ledyard,

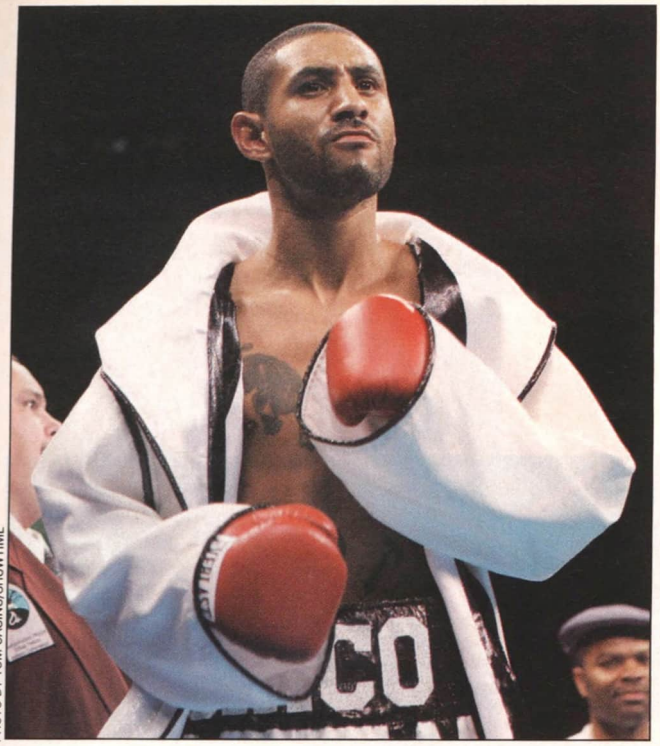


PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Was Corrales a victim of an illegal options clause?

Connecticut. That was the presiding body when he fought Freitas. Tribal commissions are really just imaginary friends. If you asked a casino-appointed "commissioner" about Article Ten, it would be like asking Dick Cheney about global warming. What global warming, you environmentalist hippie slime? What Article Ten, you fork-tongued troublemaker?

Options clauses like the one that saddled Corrales with Pelullo are among the many conflicts of interest that afflict boxing like fruit flies on a defenseless melon. A promoter inserts a clause giving him promotional rights over the opponent if his titled fighter loses. These clauses send dollar bills floating all around fighters, who aren't allowed to touch them.

You're more likely to find weapons of mass destruction in Iraq than to obtain justice from the two boxing reform acts. For example, the Ali act, Shaw pointed out, "says you must give the fighter a disclosure form. So what. If I have a billion dollars coming in and I'm paying him a dollar, he doesn't know until the day of the fight."

Senator John McCain's two previous measures had such minimal impact, it's hard to believe in his third and latest concoction, which he's struggling to get through Congress. Yes, it would establish a federal commission to enforce the rules. But the rules are full of holes as big as Butterbean's trunks.

LACY VS. TAYLOR: As Jeff Lacy paraded into the ring to beat up Rubin Williams, ultimately stopping him in seven, Lacy was accompanied by one of those private rappers shouting praise in his ear. Lacy might do better mimicking the generals of ancient Rome. According to General George Patton, as conquering heroes paraded through town in a chariot, a "slave stood behind the conqueror holding a golden crown and whispering in his ear a warning: that all glory is fleeting."

Lacy's glory may be more fleeting than is commonly supposed. The way he worked his way in close against Williams and threw big shots to the head and body, he resembled a young Mike Tyson. Naturally, the bigger Tyson punched much harder. But despite his size, he was also quicker, moved his head better, and was much harder to hit. Down the road, even before he loses a step, some well-schooled opponent will take advantage of Lacy's defects and clean his clock.

That someone could very well be Jermain Taylor when he moves up from middleweight, as he inevitably will. Like Lacy, Taylor is a tough, dangerous dude. Unlike Lacy, Taylor is multidimensional. A member of the Taylor team told me he used to give Lacy fits when they were amateurs. I believe it. And I believe he will again.

UNREALITY SHOWS: If timing is everything, then NBC's *The Contender* is in big trouble. First it let Fox's knockoff starring Oscar De La Hoya beat it to the punch. By the time the NBC show appeared, Fox's boring show had bombed and disappeared. That might have been good news for NBC. But it got to the party when the concept of reality shows was already fading. Some may survive, but only because of residual, hardcore viewers who, like wrestling fans, don't care what's phony and what isn't. As retired promoter Don Fraser said about the Fox show, which depicted bouts in a smoky arena, "Even the smoke was fake."

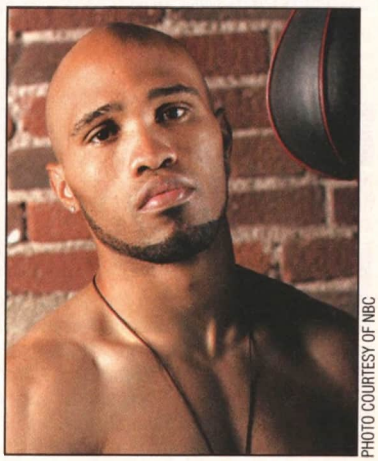


PHOTO COURTESY OF NBC

His former promoter doesn't buy Smith's* Contender *sob story

Promoter Shaw points out that because welter Ishe Smith filed for bankruptcy last year, he obtained the kind of sob story necessary to get him on *The Contender*. "Now," said Shaw, "they can complain they're bankrupt while they hold a crying baby in front of the camera." Bankruptcy also allowed Smith to escape debts to backers Shaw, Shelly Finkel, and Mike Levy, all of whom had advanced thousands in his behalf.

For every fighter screwed by the business, a fighter screws somebody in the business. I know a Los Angeles manager who loaned his fighter a car to take down to Mexico for the weekend. That weekend is 11 years long and still counting.

MAGOO: To Puerto Rico. That's right, the whole island. It's only fitting after referee Enrique Quinones Falu declared native son Miguel Cotto the winner when DeMarcus Corley took a knee in the fifth round. If fighters think taking a knee will cost them the fight, they're more likely to let their opponents keep banging them on the head. Give them the eight seconds they seek and then decide. Falu's act worked against, not for, fighters' safety.

Only last year, Mexico's Antonio Margarito got screwed in Puerto Rico against homeboy Daniel Santos. I don't have the space to go into detail. When the Magoo virus hits a location, it tends to hang around a while. The best remedy is to accept Puerto Rico as a full-fledged state. If Puerto Ricans had to sweat over income tax forms like everybody else, they'd have less time to screw out-of-town fighters. ■

CAMERA CLICKS

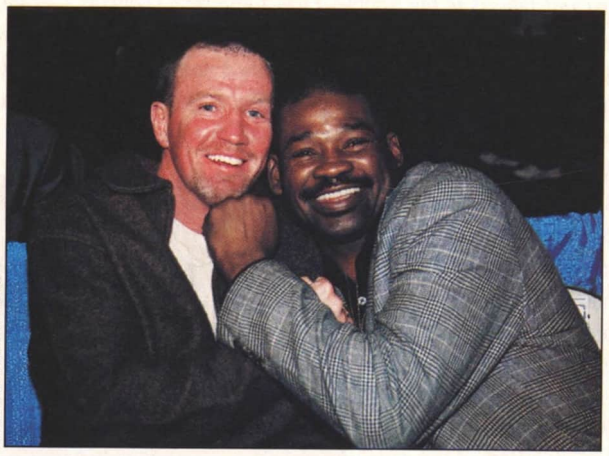


PHOTO BY GREGG MARNANE

These are not easy chins to dent, but Micky Ward and Marlon Starling appear to be giving it a shot anyway. In a 51-fight career, Lowell, Massachusetts' Ward was only stopped once—on cuts. And in a 53-fight career, Hartford, Connecticut's Starling was never officially kayoed, and the closest he came was when he got decked by an after-the-bell punch and had to settle for a no-contest. Only tough guys like these two could smile this wide with fists headed for their jaws.

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Get a room, fellas! Fernando Vargas shares a tender moment with longtime manager Shelly Finkel following "The Ferocious One's" decision victory over Raymond Joval in March. We shudder to think how far the celebration would have gone if Vargas had scored a knockout.

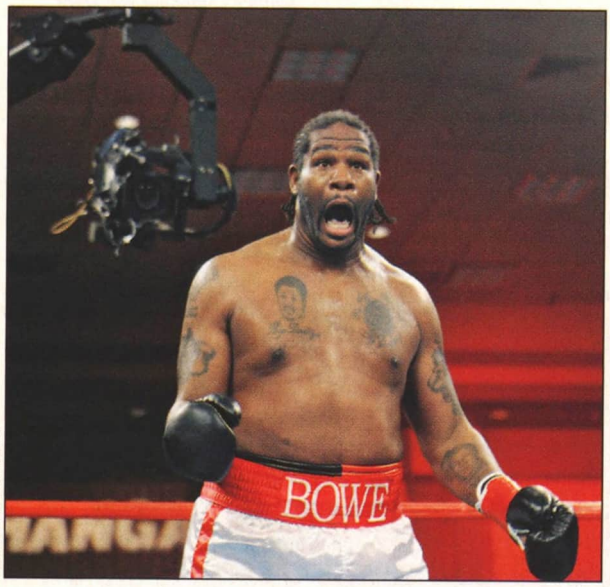


PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

Riddick Bowe's boxing skills are quite rusty, but, as his physique suggests, his eating skills are as sharp as ever, and it looks here like he's mistaken that approaching television camera for a hot fudge sundae. "What was I supposed to do?" Bowe said afterward, when asked about his mid-fight hunger pangs. "I hadn't eaten anything in almost 20 minutes."

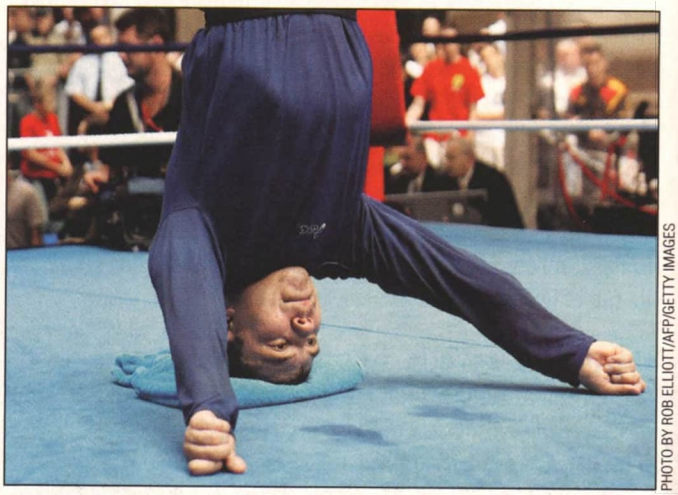


PHOTO BY ROB ELLIOTT/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Upside-down Down Under: You don't see world junior welterweight champion Kostya Tszyu with his head on the canvas very often, so when you do, there's probably a very good reason for it. In this case, Tszyu was doing some pretty darned impressive neck-strengthening exercises in preparation for his June fight with Ricky Hatton in Manchester, England.

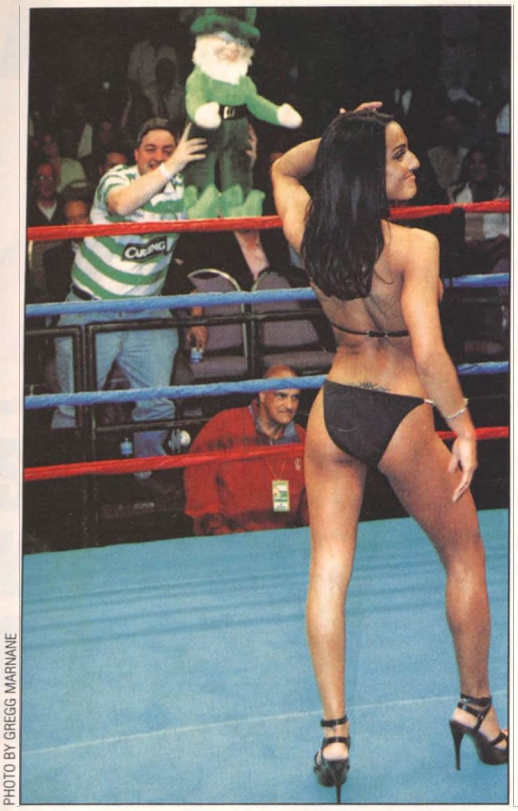


PHOTO BY GREGG MARNANE

Are you drawn to the sublime or the ridiculous? If it's the former that catches your eye, then you most likely went straight for this round card girl's posterior assets. If it's the latter, then the first thing that jumped out at you was probably the wacky fan holding up a leprechaun. Either way, it was enough to make you forget there was a boxing match going on.

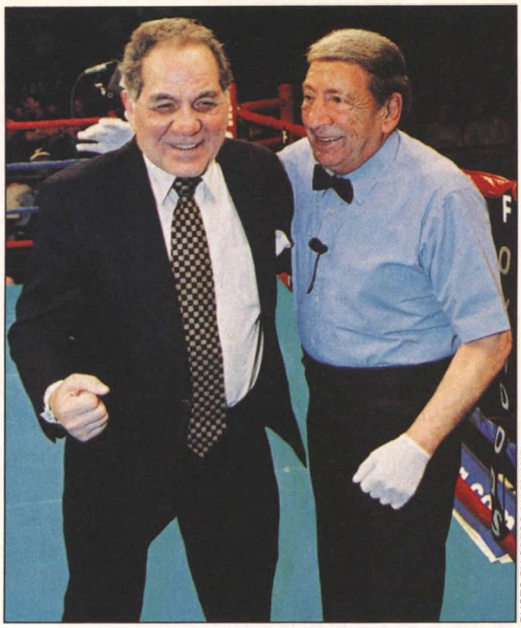


PHOTO BY GREGG MARNANE

When celebrating most anniversaries, you enjoy a glass of wine or champagne. Apparently, when celebrating the 50th anniversary of your greatest boxing victory, you toast with a Cappuccino. Exactly 50 years after he topped Johnny Saxton for the world welterweight title, Tony DeMarco took in a fight card at the Mohegan Sun in Connecticut, where he palled around with one of the standout referees of modern times, Frank Cappuccino.

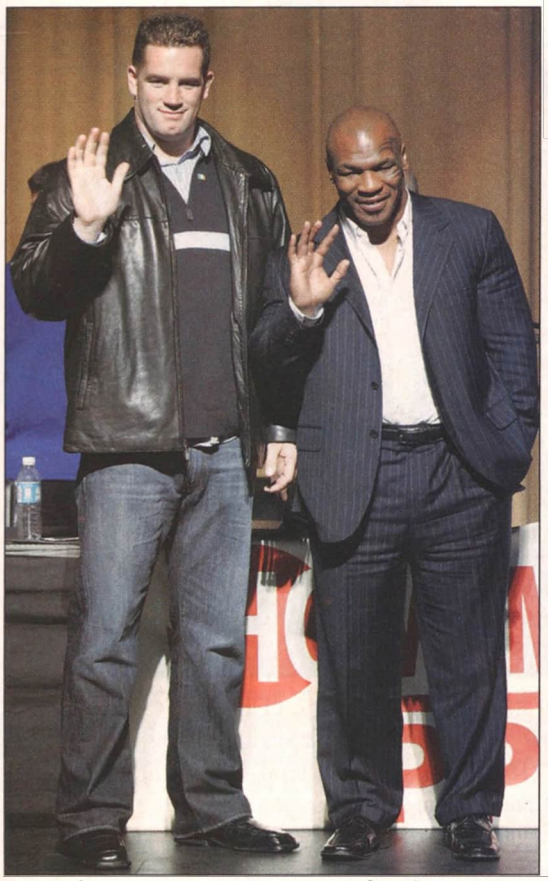
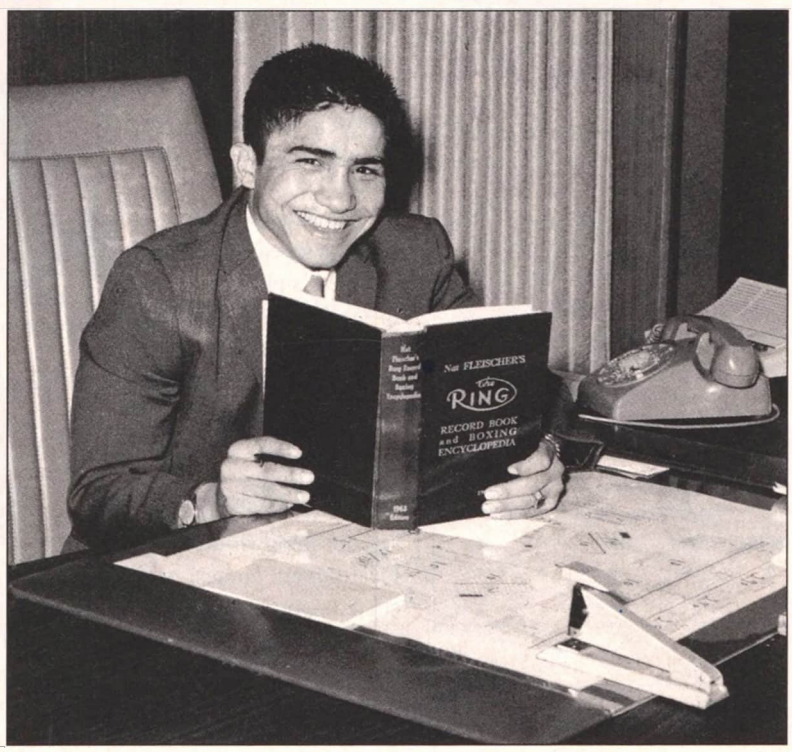


PHOTO BY CHIP SOMODEVILLA/GETTY IMAGES

How's this for a scary welcoming committee? Kevin McBride and Mike Tyson cordially greet onlookers at an April press conference to announce their June fight in Washington, D.C. Truth be told, we wouldn't be surprised to see Tyson knock McBride out with one hand in his pocket and the other palm open.

NOSTALGIA CORNER



You wanna know why former bantamweight contender Jesus Pimentel looks like he's having such a good time reading The Ring Record Book? *Because it's the 1963 edition, and the Mexican known as "Little Poison" had himself a not-too-shabby 12-0 (12) campaign in 1962. In fact, from August '61 to August '64, Pimentel scored 28 straight knockouts. No wonder he made* The Ring's *list of the top 100 punchers of all-time a few years ago.*

NEW FACES

RODEL MAYOL

Strawweight

By Ted Lerner

PRO RECORD

2000		
July 1	Joseph Villasis, Mandaue City, PI	KO 6
Aug. 8	Jack Comen, Mandaue City	KO 2
Sept. 12	Allan Llanita, Cebu City, PI	KO 5
Dec. 2	Al Tarazona, Cebu City	KO 1
2001		
Jan. 28	Ken Nakajima, Takasago, Japan	W 6
March 31	Jae-Ho Kim, Cebu City	KO 1
June 12	Julius Agcopra, Cagayan de Oro, PI	KO 4
Aug. 31	Pigmy Muangchaiyaphum, Antipolo City, PI	KO 5
Dec. 22	Billy Payla, Cebu City	KO 1
2002		
April 14	Jack Maldecir, Taguig, PI	KO 2
Aug. 3	Nino Suelo, Mandaue	W 12
Dec. 14	Chiochan Buasuwan, Taguig	KO 2
2003		
April 9	Isidro Lorona, Tagauig	W 12
Sept. 6	Namchai Taksinisan, Ormoc City,PI	KO 2
Dec. 7	Genki Ohnaka, Tokuyama, Japan	KO 1
2004		
March 16	Iwan Key, Jakarta, Indonesia	KO 6
April 6	Julio De La Basez, Jakarta	KO 8
May 21	Ernesto Rubillar, Manila, PI	W Tech. Dec. 7
Sept. 21	La Syukur, Jakarta	KO 3
2005		
Jan. 29	Marti Polii, Paranaque, PI	KO 7
April 4	Takayuki Korogi, Osaka	W 12

FIGHTS	WON	LOST	DRAW	KOs
21	21	0	0	16

In today's world of Philippine boxing, there's Manny Pacquiao and, well, everyone else. But don't for a minute think this fact upsets any of the hundreds of other Filipino boxers who toil daily in sweat boxes up and down the archipelago. It's quite the opposite. Pacquiao's meteoric success has led to a palpable sense that doors are opening and more Filipino champions are in the offing.

The Philippines is a nation starved for heroes, and there's plenty of room in the hearts of Filipinos for more Pacquiaos. Take Rodel Mayol, for instance. After five years in the professional ranks, the 23-year-old native of Manduae City, Cebu, is carving out his own niche in local boxing circles, having cleaned out the strawweight division in the Philippines and in much of Asia, while compiling a 21-0 (16) record. In 2003, he captured the Orient and Pacific Boxing Federation minimum weight championship and is currently next in line for the WBC belt.

"Even the casual boxing fan in the Philippines already knows about Mayol," said Salven Lagumbay, a Cebu sportswriter who has followed Mayol for many years. "He's the future of Philippine boxing. He's the complete package. He's got power in both hands, good lateral movement, and a great amateur background. He's also very eloquent and educated."

While it's too early to declare that Mayol is the next savior of Philippine boxing, there are quite a few reasons to take notice of this quick-rising regional star. He had a hugely successful amateur background that is evident

(Continued on page 86)

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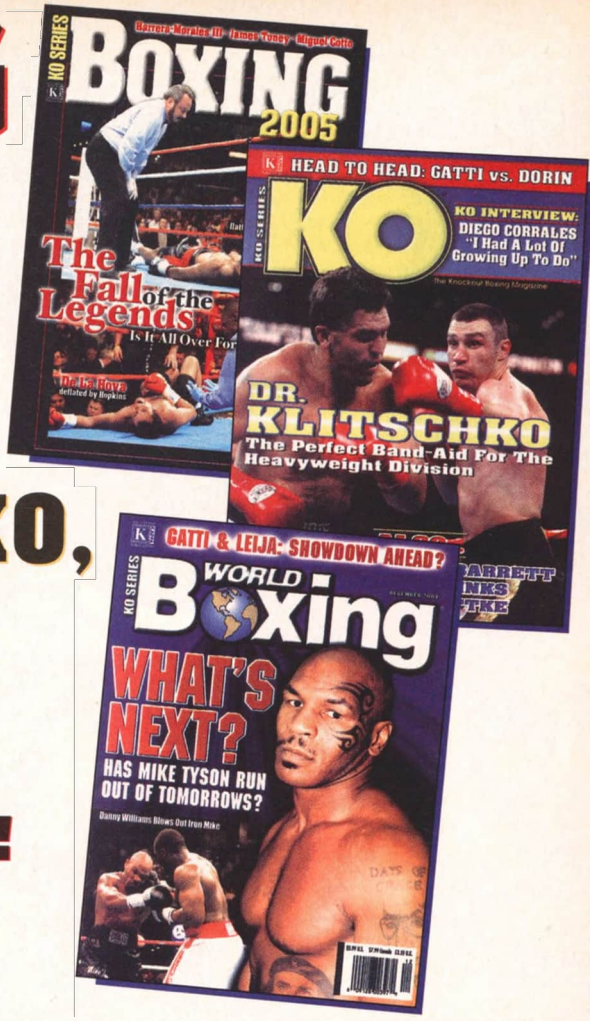

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Referee Joe Cortez raises Mora's arm in victory after his unanimous seven-round decision over Peter Manfredo. The 24-year-old Los Angeles native was inspired by his mother, standing between Sergio and Cortez.

PHOTOS BY JAM SANDERS

Boxing's Reality Check

Is *The Contender* The Ticket Back To The Mainstream?

By Eric Raskin

He didn't spend 39 days on an island in the South Pacific, plotting, scheming, forming alliances, and walking around naked. He didn't try to sell lemonade on the streets of New York and then smooth talk his way out of the path of the firing finger of Donald Trump. He didn't perform glorified karaoke to the unconditional adoration of Paula Abdul on a weekly basis.

But Sergio Mora has something in common with Richard Hatch, Bill Rancic, and Kelly Clarkson: He's a reality television first-prize winner. And reality television, as we've learned, can turn ordinary people into superstars.

The question is, can he do it when an audience only a fraction of the size of the audiences for *Survivor*, *The Apprentice*, or *American Idol* is watching? NBC's *The Contender* averaged about 6 million viewing households a week during its run from March through May. By boxing standards, those are huge numbers—about three times what the very biggest pay-per-view events of all-time have attracted. But by network television standards, those numbers could euphemistically be termed a disappointment, and more bluntly termed a disaster. On May 16, with two episodes remaining in Season One, NBC revealed that it would not be renewing *The Contender* for a second season.

On the one hand, millions of people who never watch

PHOTO COURTESY OF NBC

The cast of* The Contender, *standing (from left to right): Tarick Salmaci, Miguel Espino, Sergio Mora, Alfonso Gomez, Ahmed Kaddour, Jimmy Lange, Ishe Smith, Jesse Brinkley, Peter Manfredo, Joey Gilbert, Jonathan Reid, and Juan De La Rosa. Sitting (from left to right): Brent Cooper, Najai Turpin, Anthony Bonsante, and Jeff Fraza.

boxing became fanatically attached to *The Contender*, a mostly well-reviewed show that could garner Emmy consideration in the reality/competition division. On the other hand, networks were left with the belief that boxing isn't a ratings grabber, that it isn't a viable moneymaker. To those who loved the show, *The Contender* seemed like the perfect way to bring boxing to a wider audience and the perfect way to create mainstream superstars. Unfortunately, the numbers didn't support that belief, and it remains to be seen if this is or is not the wave of the future in terms of expanding boxing's fan base.

We know what you're thinking: If NBC just axed the show, then how can there even be a question over whether this is the wave of the future? Because *The Contender* doesn't *need* NBC, and, in fact, NBC may be to blame for the show's Nielsen nosedive.

"There's no question there's going to be a sequel," Jeff Wald, the show's creator and co-executive producer, told THE RING. "And whatever network it's on, I would hope it would be somewhere where they'd nurture it and take better care of it than NBC did. We never should've appeared on three different days and times in the first week (Monday at 9:30 p.m., Thursday at 10:00 p.m., and then Sunday at 8:00 p.m.). Secondly, we're not an 8:00 p.m. Sunday show. We're against two top-rated shows at once, *Cold Case* and *Extreme Home Makeover*—to say nothing of *The Simpsons*. When we had a two-hour block of back-to-back episodes (on April 24), it took a major ratings jump at the 9:00 slot, which is probably where we should have been all along.

"All things considered, we're not disappointed with the ratings. We've done real well with males 18 to 34 (significantly better than the show NBC previously ran in the same time slot, *American Dreams*). My

PHOTOS BY JAN SANDERS

A capacity, star-studded crowd turned out for finals at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas (left). Among the crowd were Thomas Hearns and Jackie Kallen, whose role in* The Contender *was that of "den mother" to the fighters.

friend [CBS Chairman] Les Moonves said if it had been on CBS, it would have been a top-10 show, and I believe that. But we might even go to cable for the second season. Remember that cable creates hits too. *Nip/Tuck*, *The Shield*, *Sex And The City*, *The Sopranos*, *Queer Eye For The Straight Guy*. People will go wherever a good show is."

NBC's alleged mishandling of *The Contender* wasn't the only external factor working against it. There was also a little thing called *The Next Great Champ*, the Oscar De La Hoya-hosted boxing reality show that Fox rushed onto the air in the fall of 2004. Veteran trainer Prentiss Byrd went from city to city helping cast *The Contender*, and he told THE RING during the casting process that his greatest fear regarding *Champ* was that it would be so amateurish that the public would develop negative preconceived notions about *The Contender*. "I hope they don't fall flat on their face. For them to strike out would not be good for us," Byrd said. His fears were realized. *Champ* was an unwatchable show featuring bottom-of-the-barrel prospects. It failed in the ratings and was shifted mid-season from Fox to Fox Sports Net, and *The Contender* had a huge strike against it before commercials for the show even began airing.

PHOTO COURTESY OF NBC

Originally, the likable Alfonso Gomez was considered one of the weakest contestants, but he proved the critics wrong by winding up in third place and taking home $200,000 by beating Jesse Brinkley in the semifinal.

Helping to counterbalance that, however, was the big-name talent involved with *The Contender*. Co-Executive Producer Jeffrey Katzenberg is a Hollywood heavyweight. Hosts Sylvester Stallone and Sugar Ray Leonard brought mainstream recognition and pugilistic validity, respectively. The fighters were, for the most part, legitimate welterweight/junior middleweight/middleweight prospects, or even fringe contenders in a couple of cases. And most importantly, the third co-executive producer was Mark Burnett, the undisputed king of reality TV presentation. He brought us *Survivor*—the groundbreaker that introduced the now-omnipresent concept of a television show that loses a cast member every week—and *The Apprentice*, and you just knew that, in his hands, *The Contender* would be as classy as reality TV gets (even if some people might view such a statement as an oxymoron).

"I knew that with Mark Burnett and Katzenberg and Sly it would be first class, but I still didn't really know how it would turn out," Leonard reflected. "But the way it evolved, I was just blown away. All we had to do was turn the cameras on, and you get drama. These guys all lived together. They became friends, they became associates, they cared about each other—knowing all along, fully well, that there could only be one winner. There's manipulation, there's psychology. It's a variety of emotions."

It ultimately made for entertaining television—maybe not on par with *Survivor* at its best, but certainly more real and interesting than the *Joe Millionaires* of the genre. *The Contender* is not perfect, of course, but the first season was a solid starting point, and Wald intends to look for ways to improve the show going forward.

"Look, there's going to be some major changes for next year," Wald insisted. "We won't do the challenges anymore. They suck. And they're not good for the fighters. There will be more boxing, there will be more training. We are definitely going to tweak the show creatively." Wald noted that they will probably look to focus on a different weight division next time around, but that it definitely won't be the heavyweights.

Whoever the 16 fighters are, they will be guys whom the producers believe can represent the sport proudly and connect with the fans, just as most of the fighters this season have. There was Mora, the bookworm who ran around quoting Nietzsche. There was

StockingUp

All 15 of the surviving members of ***The Contender*** *cast will see their Q-ratings boosted big time when their careers resume, but not all boosts are created equal. Here's a ranking of the 15 fighters in terms of how much they've elevated their stocks with their performances on the show:*

1. Sergio Mora
Smart and successful, "The Latin Snake" has slithered to stardom
2. Peter Manfredo
Lost the first and last fights of the series, but excelled in between
3. Alfonso Gomez
Even hardcore fans hadn't heard of this lovable Latino when the show began
4. Joey Gilbert
Made people take notice with his athleticism, his strategizing, and his heart
5. Jesse Brinkley
Semifinalist was maybe the show's best sound bite
6. Ishe Smith
Reality TV villains often cash in on the notoriety
7. Anthony Bonsante
The "#1 Dad" had his annoying qualities, but he nearly made the semis
8. Ahmed Kaddour
His record fell from 18-0 to 18-2, but no one will forget "Hollywood"
9. Jimmy Lange
Got decent face time by waiting until the last episode of the first round to fight
10. Miguel Espino
A forgettable character, but losing to Manfredo is no shame
11. Jeff Fraza
The Chicken Pox Kid won some sympathy votes
12. Juan De La Rosa
Squandered potential popularity when he quit after a physically demanding win
13. Jonathan Reid
The old man of the show, "Reid-Dawg" gained little beyond exposure
14. Tarick Salmaci
Showed the masses how little the designation "former alphabet mandatory" means
15. Brent Cooper
The one cast member who would've fit in better on ***The Next Great Champ***

—ER

The Five Best Fights

Jeff Wald described the 14 fights leading up to the finale as follows: "We had 12 great fights, one okay fight, and one s___ fight." Thanks to the wonders of editing, however, even the "okay" fight and the rhymes-with-spit fight seemed pretty darned entertaining to us. Here were the five best fights—as best we could tell based on the abridged versions presented to us—from the inaugural season of ***The Contender****:*

1. Sergio Mora vs. Najai Turpin

Two of the fastest, slickest fighters in the competition, Mora and Turpin kept up a ridiculous pace in this bout from the fourth episode, landing one flush punch after another. In what would turn out to be his final professional fight, Turpin gave a performance that will endure in the minds of all who saw it.

2. Peter Manfredo vs. Alfonso Gomez II

What a difference two extra rounds can make. Through five, Gomez appeared to have a lead, but Manfredo hurt him in the sixth and won the seventh as well to avenge his earlier defeat. Gomez' face afterward revealed what a grueling seven rounds these were.

3. Joey Gilbert vs. Jimmy Lange

No fighter showed more heart in this competition than Gilbert did, especially when he fought on one leg and upset the well-regarded Lange. This was perhaps the most dramatic bout of the season.

4. Ishe Smith vs. Ahmed Kaddour

Smith and Kaddour had been hating each other since the moment they moved into the house. Add in the fact that both were undefeated coming in, and the expectations were quite high. Impressively, the expectations were met.

5. Alfonso Gomez vs. Peter Manfredo I

The fight that started it all. Given no chance against the most feared fighter on the show, puffed-up welterweight Gomez made the debut episode memorable with his gutsy, eye-opening victory.

—ER

Joey Gilbert, a lawyer. There were fathers, sons, husbands, brothers—humans. There was Najai Turpin, who was all too human, his demons leading him to commit suicide just weeks before the show would begin airing. None of these guys came across like Mike Tyson. They didn't come off as thugs. Many had their flaws, but none fell into the public's stereotype of boxers.

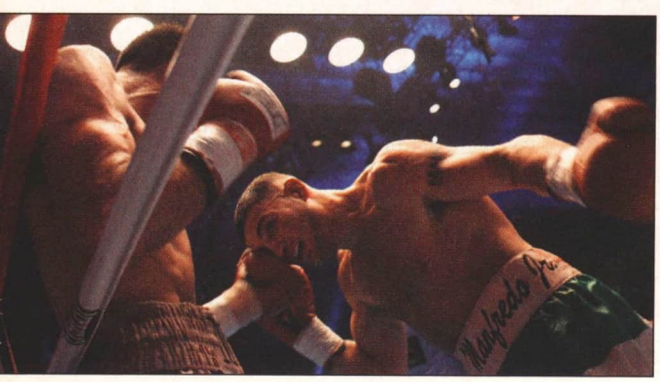
"The perception is that to be a boxer, you have to be a bad guy, nasty guy," Leonard said. "I think *The Contender* dispels that, for sure. I'm an optimistic guy; if I could be optimistic in the 12th round with Tommy Hearns, I could be optimistic about anything. And I believe that we can turn boxing around because of shows like this. Hopefully, it'll bring in non-boxing people who care about the fighters. People embrace the stories. These vignettes that the network used to show about boxers back in the day, that's what captures people's hearts and emotions."

It's almost a guarantee that the fighters on the show will have bigger fan bases following their careers from this point forward. It's even possible that a guy like Peter Manfredo or Mora could instantly draw better ratings fighting on HBO or Showtime than elite fighters like Winky Wright or Kostya Tszyu could. Will that interest spread to other fighters who weren't on *The Contender*? Time will tell. Will the 15 new TV stars re-entering the unedited side of the sport be handled properly? We don't know.

But we do know *who* will be handling them. For better or for worse, all of the contestants on the show are now tied into promotional contracts with the Wald/Katzenberg/Burnett team. On the one hand, it sounds like the same overly controlling situation that has led fighters to feel like slaves for decades. But maybe, just maybe, these fighters are being controlled by the right people, people who know how to maximize their earnings rather than marginalizing the sport.

"We're in boxing for good," Wald declared. "And Katzenberg, Burnett, they have so much money, you couldn't buy them off. They're all motivated by their love of the sport. And these people running the sport now, they f___ed it up, and they shouldn't have let us in. And they let us in because they did a s___ty job with it. Well, we could bring in Super Bowl type events by bringing millions more fans to the sport."

That's big talk from a guy whose show is generally viewed as a ratings



PHOTOS BY JAN SANDERS

Manfredo took the fight to Mora and forced him into the ropes throughout most of the fight. But it was "The Latin Snake" who did most of the scoring, repeatedly catching Manfredo with short uppercuts on the inside to win a unanimous decision, a million dollars, and new truck.

failure. But it's not completely out of line. You could think of *The Contender* as a show that finished fourth in its time slot … or you could think of it as a show that reached more people than boxing has reached since Rocky Balboa drank his last raw egg.

Certainly, there is evidence to suggest the program is already having an impact. For starters, the live finale at Caesars Palace sold out in just five minutes.

"I'll tell you three other reasons that show me we're accomplishing something," Wald said. "We got a beautiful letter from the head of the Boxing Hall of Fame in Canastota, New York [Ed Brophy], and they want our winner to be a guest of honor for Hall of Fame weekend. ESPN wants the guy to come to Bristol, Connecticut, and be on the air with them that weekend after the finale. And even [WBC President] Jose Sulaiman would like to honor the winner with a belt and give him a top-10 ranking. But how 'bout this? We're absolutely not going to do that one. Under no circumstance. But Jose is a really smart political guy. And if we hadn't made some real inroads and had an impact on boxing, he would ignore us like we're dead."

Thankfully, *The Contender* isn't dead. Somewhere, on some network, it will be back, hopefully producing 16 new stars and a few million more fans.

Boxing is mostly a cult sport these days, and superstars aren't created as easily as they were in Joe Louis' day or even Ray Leonard's day. It's somewhat ironic that in the sport called *boxing*, promoters often seemed so incapable of thinking outside the *box*. At least the brain trust behind *The Contender* is trying something different. Maybe this show will catapult boxing back into the mainstream; maybe its mediocre ratings are just fueling the anti-boxing sentiment perpetuated by the mainstream media.

Either way, a chance was taken here. So nobody involved with *The Contender* will look back with regret, talking about how they coulda been a contender. ■

Eric Raskin is contributing editor for THE RING.

Mora Than Manfredo Could Handle

Early in the sixth round of Sergio Mora's *Contender* championship win over Peter Manfredo, Sylvester Stallone, acting as a color commentator, exclaimed, "This is a candidate for Fight of the Year!" Apparently someone didn't see Corrales-Castillo.

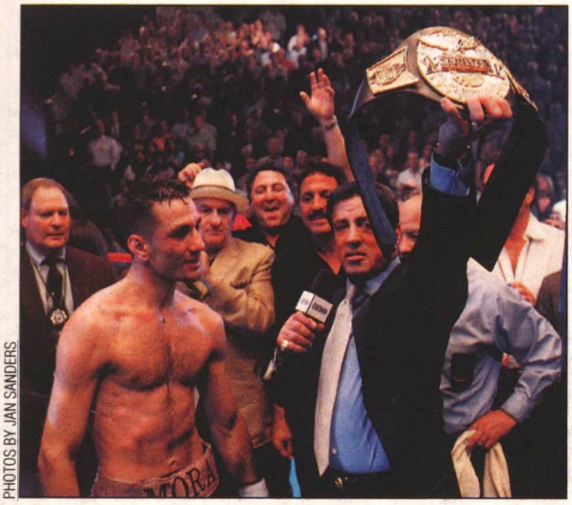
The final episode of the season excelled in spite of itself. Stallone and Ray Leonard were major distractions as analysts. The inset boxes in the corner of the screen showing the fighters' loved ones during the action grew annoying quickly. The lighting wasn't great. We would've preferred that rapper Hush live up to his name a little better. Basically, many of the production elements dragged the show down.

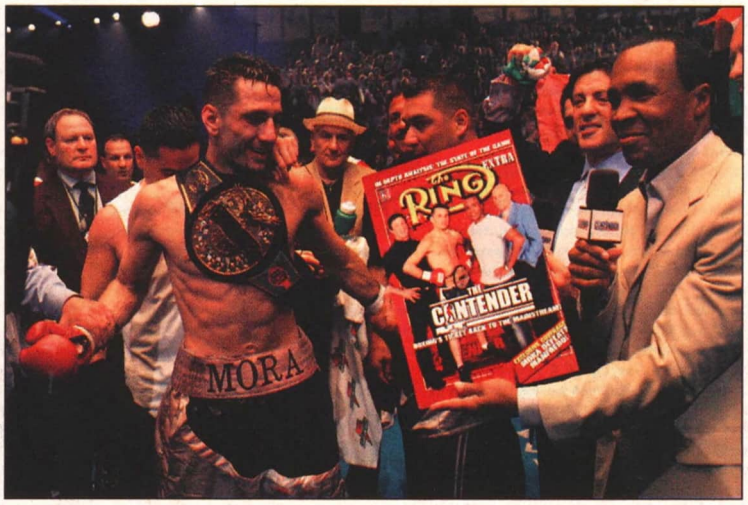
But the boxing redeemed it. This was not, as Stallone dubbed it, a Fight of the Year candidate. But Mora-Manfredo was a solid action fight, and the semifinal between Alfonso Gomez and Jesse Brinkley was even better. Several million people watched live boxing on NBC on May 24, and thankfully, they saw exciting enough boxing to potentially tune in for more.

After Gomez, 13-3-1 (4), picked up a $200,000 check for his five-round unanimous decision win over Brinkley, 25-3 (17), Mora and Manfredo stepped into the ring at Caesars Palace to fight for the $1-million first prize, a *Contender* belt, and a position on the cover of this magazine. The first three rounds were hard-fought and hard to score, but late in the fourth, Mora ripped Manfredo, 24-2 (10), with a searing combination and never looked back. "The Latin Snake" dominated a fifth round in which he found himself talking smack with Manfredo's father, hurt Manfredo to the body in the sixth, and pounded him with pinpoint combos to close the seventh and final round. Mora won 70-63 on Paul Smith's scorecard, 69-64 on Duane Ford's tally, and 68-65 on Jerry Roth's card. THE RING had it the same as Ford, 69-64.

"I would give Manfredo a rematch anytime, any day," said Mora, 16-0 (3), afterward. That won't be necessary, however. Mora has emerged as the class of *The Contender*, and now he is legitimately knocking on the door of the top 10, ready to go from taking on the best of the "reality" world to taking on the best of the real world.

—ER





PHOTOS BY JAN SANDERS

Stallone shows* The Contender *belt to the crowd before awarding it to Mora (above left). Moments later Leonard presented Mora with an enlarged reproduction of this issue's cover (above right). Manfredo earned $250,000.

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March 1988: Thomas "Hit Man" Hearns: "Now I Own History." Plus: Lockridge & Mayweather, Tony Burton, Julio Cesar Chavez, blood.

April 1988: Evander Holyfield: Fighter Of The Year. Plus: Special year-end awards, Holyfield-Qawi II, Foreman-Sekorski, Hill-Angulo.

May 1988: George Foreman: "I Can Beat Tyson." Plus: Tyson-Holmes, Jesse Benavides, Showtime, no-knockout artists.

Sept. 1988: Sugar Ray: Here He Comes Again! Plus: Andries-Czyz, Kid Chocolate, Don Dunphy, Don Lalonde.

Oct. 1988: Mike Tyson: What Price Glory? Plus: Tyson-Spinks, Hearns-Barkley, Davey Moore.

Nov. 1988: Donny Lalonde: "Sugar Ray is Out Of His Mind!" Plus: Hall of Fame selections (Carlos Ortiz, Joe Brown, Billy Graham, Cus D'Amato, Jimmy Jacobs), Nunn-Tate, Molinares-Starling, Honeyghan-Chung, '88 Olympians.

Jan. 1989: Meldrick Taylor: Philly Phenom. Plus: Marvin Hagler, Alex Wallau, Taylor-McGirt, Olympic results.

Feb. 1989: Julio Cesar Chavez. Plus: Chavez-Ramirez, all-time lightweight ratings, Louie Espinoza, Simon Brown, Roger Mayweather.

March 1989: Hearns Next For Sugar Ray? Plus: Leonard-Lalonde, Prince Charles Williams, Hearns-Kinchen, Nunn-Roldan, Hines-Hilton.

May 1989: The Best Of '88. Plus: Year-end awards, Evander Holyfield, Pryor-Morales, Fenech-Navarro.

Feb. 1990: Mike Tyson: Riddick Bowe & Ray Mercer Take Aim. Plus: Bobby Czyz, Gerry Cooney, Chuck Wepner, Antonio Esparragoza, Roman-Laciar.

March 1990: The '80s—Great Fights, Great Fighters (color). Plus: Jeff Harding, Evander Holyfield, Pete Rademacher, Sharkey-McCoy.

April 1990: Pernell Whitaker: Fighter Of The Year (color). Plus: Tiger Flowers, Duran-Leonard, Chavez-Taylor preview, Jorge Paez, Ali-Cooper.

May 1990: Big George Talks Tough: "Tyson Won't Be That Difficult!" Plus: Ed Hopson, Russian fighters, grudge wars, Archie Moore, Kid Berg, Marcel Cerdan, Chavez-Cortes.

June 1990: Buster! How James Douglas Shocked The World. Plus: Michael Moorer, Camacho-Paez, Tommy Farr, excuses, Dick Tiger, Ruben Olivares-Jeff Chandler.

July 1990: "I'm Hungrier Than Ever Before," By Evander Holyfield. Plus: James Toney, Buddy McGirt, Glenwood Brown, Aaron Davis, Michael Carbajal, Jorge Paez, Kid Gavilan, Mark Breland, Ali-Liston II (color).

Sept. 1990: Marvin Hagler—Can He Resist The Irresistible Temptation? Plus: Thomas Hearns, Sanchez-Saddler, Paul Banke, puncher vs. chin, Beau Jack, Robinson-LaMotta (color).

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Feb. 1991: Boxing On TV—Now You'll Pay! Plus: Ismael Laguna, Tommy Morrison in *Rocky V*, Reggie Tuur, Chiquita Gonzalez, Harold Green, Joe Louis.

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July 1992: Does Larry Holmes Deserve A Title Shot? Plus: Nelson-Fenech II, Tracy Patterson, Kelley-Dorsey, fat fighters, Buchanan-Camacho, Holmes-Ali (color).

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Summer 2004: Squeezed Out: Is There A Superfight For Felix Trinidad? Also: Joe Mesi, Miguel Cotto, Winky Wright, Ceferino Garcia.

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Fall 2004: Trinidad vs. Mayorga: Comeback Or Calamity. Also: Vitali Klitschko, Marco Antonio Barrera, Juan Diaz, Jimmy Clabby.

Dec. 2004 (100-Page Extra): The Ring 100. Also: Diego Corrales, Rafael Marquez, Williams-Tyson, Gatti-Mayweather preview, boxing and government.

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Winter 2005: 1980s vs. Today: Comparing The Middleweight Superstars. Also: Roy Jones, Leija-Gatti preview, Terry Downes, comebacks.

April 2005—How Kostya Tszyu Mastered The Sweet Science: The Metamorphosis Of A Near-Perfect Fighter. Also: Barrera-Morales III, Winky Wright, Vivian Harris, 10 greatest title reigns, 10 burning questions.

Spring 2005—Svelter Welter: Moving To 147 Will Tip The Scale In Oscar's Favor. Also: Vitali Klitschko, Glen Johnson, Andre Ward, Johnny Persol.

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A bloody but victorious Arce celebrates his hard-fought victory over Hussein after an action-packed flyweight match (left). Both men landed lots of leather in the thrilling brawl, but Arce just kept coming (opposite page) to finally wear down Hussein for a 10th-round TKO victory.

Cowboy Hats, Lollipops, And Blood

JORGE ARCE BRINGS REALITY TO THE FLYWEIGHT DIVISION

By Don Stewart

PHOTOS BY WILL HART/HBO

Just before what would turn out to be a brutal bout against Hussein Hussein, Jorge Arce bid farewell to his daughter, Michelle. The four-year-old made a motion with her hand, as if she were throwing something in Arce's face. It was magic dust, Michelle explained, that would protect him from any harm that night.

Her father would go on to win, but not before suffering a deep gash above his broken nose that caused blood to seep into his left eye, and all over his body. Unfazed, Arce kept swinging until he stopped Hussein in the 10th round of a back-and-forth slugfest on the undercard of the equally thrilling Eric Morales-Manny Pacquiao fight at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas.

"I guess we need to get a lot more of that dust," the Mexican flyweight joked, "because it's not helping."

Any further help seems unfair. There's already an amazing amount of magic in that tiny, energetic body. While many American fight fans were pleasantly surprised March 19 in getting their first taste of Arce, their counterparts south of the border were quite familiar with "Travieso," whose nickname means "mischievous."

A pro by 16 and an alphabet world titlist by 19, Arce, 39-3-1 (29), built a strong following with an exciting, reckless style and an arrogant demeanor. Just as busy outside of the ring, the Los Mochis native sings in a regional band (an album is due out soon). Arce wasn't a star in his native country, until he landed a spot on the Mexico reality TV series *Big Brother* in 2003. Chosen to live in a house with several polished celebrities, he was expected to be among

Arce almost ended matters early when he hurt Hussein with a left hook in the first round, but the Jeff Fenech-trained Australian survived and battled back to give both Arce and the fans their money's worth in a Fight of the Year candidate at the MGM Grand.

the first voted off the show. But his charisma soon warmed skeptical viewers, who flooded the network with calls in support of the tiny brawler. Arce finished third and became a national celebrity.

"He became an overnight sensation because of his personality," Telefutura commentator Bernardo Osuna said. "Even fans who didn't know anything about boxing were Jorge Arce fans all of a sudden. It kind of sparked a curiosity. What kind of fighter is he?"

While the TV stint showed Mexico that Arce was a fun guy, his new fans wanted to see if he could actually box. Those skeptics still weren't sure after 2004. His lack of between-fights discipline has often led to tough last-minute battles at the scales, which has made some of his fights tougher than they had to be. While he made four successful defenses of his WBC light flyweight belt last year, opponents such as Juan Centeno, Joma Gamboa, Juanito Rubillar, and a 36-year-old Melchor Cob Castro didn't thrill anyone. As a boxer, Arce wasn't being taken seriously by the general public.

The Hussein fight, Arce's first since ditching the WBC 108-pound title and moving up to flyweight, changed all that. "Now he's a celebrity *and* a great boxer," said Top Rank publicist Ricardo Jimenez.

Before stopping Hussein, Arce's image was stained by memories of his last defeat. In July of 1999, after beating on an aged Michael Carbajal for 10 rounds, Arce got careless and ate an overhand right that resulted in an 11th-round TKO loss. Carbajal never fought again, while Arce has needed 5½ years and 19 straight wins to redeem himself.

"When I fought him, I was only 19," Arce said through a translator. "My body wasn't mature enough, I wasn't that strong. There's no comparison to what I feel now. My body has matured. I used to spar with people at my own weight. Now I have to spar with guys who are a lot heavier because they can take my punch. My body and my mentality are totally different. When I lost that fight, it hurt a lot. But I went back and got ready and I came back strong. Nobody beats me at this weight."

A week before the Hussein fight, Arce told Jimenez that he wasn't leaving Las Vegas without putting on a great fight, regardless of whether he got knocked out. Arce seemed focused on giving the fans their money's worth, even as he entered the ring. He wore a black cowboy hat, which he said was a tribute to his home state of Sinaloa. Arce also sucked on a lollipop, which is a regular prefight habit. As an amateur, he was often referred to as a baby, so Arce uses the lollipop as a reminder that he's still young, still having fun.

"He's very spontaneous," Jimenez said. "He talks to everyone. He likes to put on a

Hussein and Arce took turns drilling each other with flush shots throughout their savage encounter. Making things even worse for the Mexican was that after the sixth round he was in danger of being stopped due to the gory cut on the bridge of his nose.

show. He comes in with his hat and his lollipop. He's just a fun kid."

Arce said his plan was to fight at a pace Hussein couldn't hope to match for 12 rounds. He appeared to overwhelm the Australian early, as a left hook had Hussein ready to go in the opening seconds of the first round. Hussein survived the round, however, thus beginning a 10-round Mexican standoff.

"In the first round, when I had this guy knocked out, I could have finished him then and there, but I felt I needed to show more of myself," Arce claimed. "This guy

Hussein began the ninth well, but Arce started to take over in second half of the round. Afterward, Hussein said that he had suffered a broken jaw at some point in the fight and that his balance was affected by the injury. Both men absorbed copious punishment.

always comes in cold. I knew if I didn't finish it, he would give me a great fight. But I knew I could beat him. I knew no matter what he did that I was going to beat him that night."

The two traded punches throughout, with Arce pushing the more polished Hussein backward. Pounding the body, Arce repeatedly hurt his opponent, but Hussein, 27-2 (21), always rallied back to put pressure on Arce. He stunned Arce with a well-timed right hand to the face in the third. In the fifth, Hussein landed a left hook to the jaw off the ropes, endured an Arce flurry, and then connected with a left hook-right hand combo. The second shot opened up the deep gash high on the left side of Arce's nose.

As the ringside doctor took a long look at the cut, Arce pleaded with him not to stop the fight. His corner never managed to stop the bleeding, but it was determined the cut wasn't affecting Arce's vision. The bout went on, much to the delight of everyone watching.

"In terms of raw drama and passion, there's lasting images you're going to have of that fight," Osuna said. "The cut, the doctor coming over, and [Arce] begging the doctor not to stop the fight. Arce punching himself in the jaw, telling Hussein to hit him. You got two guys, maybe without the best boxing skills, but just showing pure heart. It was a great night of boxing. The only thing that could overshadow it was a fight that lived up to the hype like Morales-Pacquiao. But you couldn't pack more emotion into a fight than those 10 rounds."

The two men continued to trade after the fifth, with Hussein's uppercuts slightly more effective than Arce's hooks. By the eighth, Arce appeared to be slowing down from the blood loss. Hussein landed a big left hook to the head early in the round, then a nice three-punch combo midway through. But Arce's bodywork set up a solid left hook to the jaw late in the round (likely the blow that broke the jaw). "Something happened to my jawbone," Hussein told the *Sydney Daily Telegraph* afterward. "Every time I got hit on the jaw I became unbalanced."

Hussein was penalized a point late in the round for pushing Arce to the canvas. The momentum clearly in his favor, Arce picked it back up in the ninth and 10th. In the 10th, he trapped Hussein in a corner and let loose a barrage of punches. A right hand and a left hook to the chin finally caused Hussein to crumple in the corner. Trainer-manager Jeff Fenech leapt into the ring, forcing referee Vic Drakulich to stop it with 53 seconds remaining in the round.

Arce said Hussein had to beat two people that night, not just him. He fights for his father, who always wanted to become a

When a weary and battered Hussein went down under a barrage of Arce's punches in the 10th round, his corner stopped the fight before the referee completed the count. According to CompuBox, Arce landed 250 punches, compared to 209 for Hussein.

fighter, but growing up in a house with 20 family members, had to spend his youth working. He never expressed that frustration with his son. Still, Jorge grew up with a natural desire to fight. Arce remembers picking out boxing gloves as a kid when his friends went to a store to buy baseball gloves.

Arce was officially introduced to the sport at age eight by Manuel Montiel, the father of junior bantamweight contender Fernando Montiel. Four years later, Arce's father was seriously injured in an accident. In the hospital, Jorge promised his father that, if he lived, he would see his son win a world title. The elder Arce survived. Seven years later, Jorge gave him the WBO junior flyweight belt he captured by outpointing Juan Domingo Cordoba.

"I feel like my father is inside me," Arce said. "I feel like every time I go into the ring my father's with me. To beat me, you have to beat someone very special and someone who wants it more than you do. I know Carbajal beat me, but he took the beating of his life to beat me. I feel like you're fighting two people when you're fighting me."

The dramatic win against Hussein sets up a mandatory challenge of Thailand's Pongsaklek Wonjongkam, THE RING's top-rated flyweight, for the WBC version of the title, tentatively scheduled for July 30 in Las Vegas. If he beats Wonjongkam, Arce wants to defend against Nicaragua's Rosendo Alvarez and 2000 U.S. Olympian Brian Viloria while unifying the title (something he failed to do at 108). Viloria sparked Arce's ire by once calling out his younger brother, Francisco "Panchito" Arce.

After unifying the flyweight belts, Arce said he wants to move to 115 pounds and win a third title. The 25-year-old hopes to retire young, but said he won't leave the sport until he has established a secure financial outlook for his family.

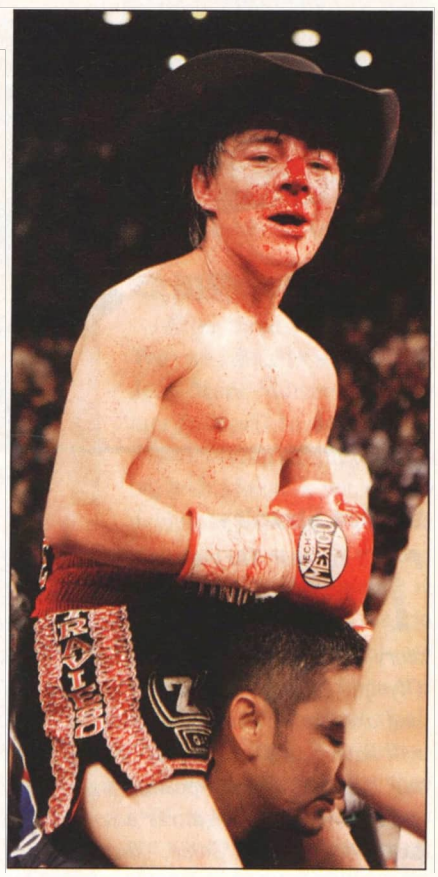
"I think he'll be okay at 112 pounds," Osuna said. "More than the weight, I think it's an issue of reach and height and the punching power of the 112-pounders. He's always had a problem with weight. Now he can be a little bit more comfortable, as long as he doesn't fall into the bad habits of trying to make weight at the last minute. It really comes down to him working on how he's going to get his weight down prior to the fight."

With his popularity booming, the opportunities appear to be unique for Arce, who could find himself fighting for heavyweight money in the flyweight division. The day after beating Hussein, he was stopped in a Las Vegas shopping mall by several autograph-seekers. For the first time, those fans weren't Latinos.

"I think he's in a position where he can really grow as a boxer," Osuna said. "He needs to take advantage of the opportunities he has created for himself in the ring. If he really settles down and takes his training seriously, works on his weight, he has the potential to come onto the scene and take advantage of what happened on the Morales-Pacquiao undercard."

Especially if he can find some more of that magic dust. ■

Don Stewart covers boxing for the Reading (Pennsylvania) Eagle and is a regular contributor to this magazine.



Arce has his cowboy hat back on, but he's still dripping blood several minutes after the conclusion of his war with Hussein. Winning such an exciting fight on HBO PPV, on top of his role in a Mexican reality TV show, has boosted his box-office appeal considerably.

Our Exclusive Annual Report

THE STATE OF THE GAME

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Klitschko lands a right en route to stopping Danny Williams

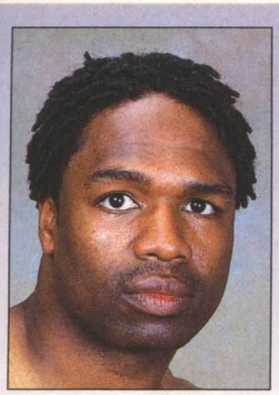
By Don Stradley

This year The Academy Award for Best Picture went to a boxing flick. The last time this happened was when ***Rocky*** *won the honors for 1976. There are many who credit the story of Rocky Balboa, coupled with the success of the 1976 U.S. Olympic boxing team, with reviving people's interest in boxing, and are hoping that the reception given to* ***Million Dollar Baby*** *will have a similar effect in 2005. That's probably wishful thinking, but we'll take any positive sign we can get. And even if we've seen many of the negatives associated with our sport since the last "State Of The Game," there are certainly signs that things are getting better.*

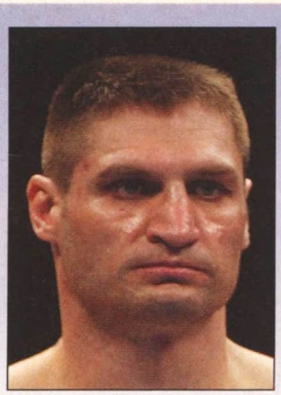
We can see it in the efforts of promoters, such as Golden Boy Promotions, which in less than three years has become a major player. We see it in the unlikely alliances being formed, such as Goossen-Tutor teaming up with ***The Best Damn Sports Show Period****, and Main Events' partnership with ESPN.*

Another reason to think positively is that boxing seems to be everywhere these days. PBS' ***American Experience*** *series revisited the historic Louis-Schmeling bouts. Jack Johnson and Emile Griffith were the subjects of fine documentaries, and network television treated us to two boxing-themed reality shows. And let's not forget the great fights we've had in the past year. We've seen the dramatic returns of Felix Trinidad and Kostya Tszyu, and the continued excellence of Marco Antonio Barrera and Erik Morales. Granted, there's a lot of work to be done. In fact, as we write this year's "State Of The Game," boxing is like a sports franchise in the middle of a rebuilding process. We may not be having a championship season, but it's still fun to be a fan.*

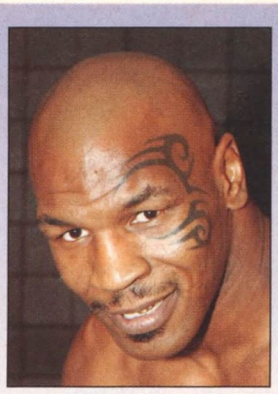
Perhaps the most significant event in 2004 was when Antonio Tarver and Glen Johnson allowed their alphabet belts to be stripped in order to fight each other for what THE RING *recognized*



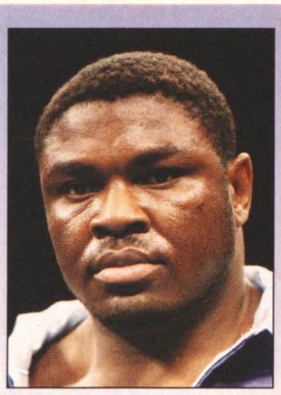
Chris Byrd



Andrew Golota



Mike Tyson



Samuel Peter

as the legitimate light heavyweight championship. The alphabet gangs still have a grip on the sport, but it will be interesting to see if more fighters drop their tin titles in pursuit of meaningful fights. Tarver and Johnson not only gave us a great bout, they may have paved the way for a less cluttered sport.

It won't happen overnight, but like we said, it's a rebuilding process.

One note as you read these 16 pages: In each division, we name a fighter who "Deserves A Title Shot." What this means in a given division depends on whether or not there's a RING *champ. If there is one (or there will be one by the time this magazine hits the newsstands), then we've named the man most deserving of a crack at that champ. If not, then we've named a non-beltholder worthy of a shot at an alphabet title.*

HEAVYWEIGHT

Maybe THE RING's champion, **Vitali Klitschko**, isn't everyone's cup of tea. Maybe **Chris Byrd** and **John Ruiz** bore you. But admit it: You'll never stop caring about what happens in this division; you'll never stop following the heavyweights.

At this time last year, we were hoping for a showdown between **Roy Jones** and **Mike Tyson**. We were also wondering if Klitschko would live up to the cheers he heard after his controversial loss to **Lennox Lewis**. Well, Tyson and Jones may have ended up on their backsides, but Klitschko had an impressive 2004, manhandling **Corrie Sanders** for the championship, and then destroying **Danny Williams**. And Byrd has been more fun lately—his struggles with **Andrew Golota** and **Jameel McCline** were more enjoyable than most of his past fights. And while Ruiz has become the cockroach of boxing—impossible to get rid of—he's also been winning a certain measure of respect as he continues winning fights. **James Toney**'s bout with Ruiz, scheduled to have happened by the time you read this, didn't have the makings of an artistic success, but the interaction between Toney and Ruiz' head cheerleader, the abrasive Norman Stone, will be worth hearing.

It wouldn't be a pay-per-view blockbuster, but there's no denying the importance of a rematch between Byrd and Klitschko. We'll bet it happens, but first the champ has to turn back **Hasim Rahman**, who has revived his career by beating a bunch of third-rate opponents. We'll also bet you're rooting for Golota to beat **Lamon Brewster** in their upcoming bout. The novelty of "The Foul Pole" winning a belt, even if it's merely the WBO trinket, would nearly equal the long-suffering Frank Bruno winning of the WBC strap back in '95.

Monte Barrett is the division's prospect killer, derailing **Dominick Guinn** and **Owen Beck**. He'd better receive a title shot soon because he's no longer a gatekeeper—he's a legit threat. And with Tyson scheduled to return to action against **Kevin McBride** in June, the on-again-off-again career of **David Tua**, and the continued mayhem of **Sam Peter**, the heavies will give us plenty to talk about.

Think About It: Isn't it interesting that all during Lennox Lewis' reign at the top we groused about how boring he was, yet now that he's gone, we're all hoping he'll come back once more to fight Klitschko? Lewis knows a rematch would bring him a huge payday, and he'd be smart to get there before someone else bursts the Ukrainian's bubble.

HEAVYWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Samuel Peter

Best Boxer
James Toney

Most Protected
Audley Harrison

Is He Still Around?
Shannon Briggs

Matchmaker's Dream
Vitali Klitschko-Lennox Lewis II

Deserves A Title Shot
Chris Byrd

Most Fun To Watch
Mike Tyson

On The Way Down
Clifford Etienne

Underrated
Chris Byrd

Overrated
Lamon Brewster

Best Fight In 2004
Danny Williams KO 4
Mike Tyson

CRUISERWEIGHT

After three cancellations, **Wayne Braithwaite** and **Jean-Marc Mormeck** finally met in April to decide THE RING's cruiserweight champion, with Mormeck winning by decision. Perhaps Mormeck and his promoter, Don King, can drum up some interest in this often overlooked weight class. After all, Mormeck can punch and he can box, and there are some good challengers for him. With heavyweights becoming larger than ever, we may be entering an era where cruiser champs are content to stay where they are. But Mormeck has to start fighting more than once a year.

Kelvin Davis won the vacant IBF strap last year by

CRUISERWEIGHT

Best Puncher
O'Neil Bell

Best Boxer
Johnny Nelson

Most Protected
Mohamed Benguesmia

Is He Still Around?
Bash Ali

Matchmaker's Dream
Jean-Marc Mormeck –O'Neil Bell

Deserves A Title Shot
O'Neil Bell

Most Fun To Watch
Carl Thompson

On The Way Down
Glen Kelly

Underrated
Alexander Gurov

Overrated
David Haye

Best Fight In 2004
Carl Thompson KO 9
Sebastian Rothman

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND

Mormeck (right) unified cruiser crown by outpointing Braithwaite

stopping **Ezra Sellers**, but was stripped for failing to defend against his mandatory challenger, **O'Neil Bell**, and has since been plagued by promotional problems. Bell defeated Davis in '03 by a controversial knockout (Bell hit Davis while he was down), so a rematch would be tasty. "Give 'Em Hell" Bell hasn't lost since his rookie year of 1998, and is the type of puncher who could bring some attention to the division. Bell and "Cowboy" **Dale Brown** were scheduled to face off for the vacant IBF title in May. Philly's **Steve Cunningham** may make some noise soon, as will Russian cruiser **Grigory Drozd**. **Carl Thompson** and long reigning WBO titlist **Johnny Nelson** are two of the best cruiserweights, but fight almost exclusively in England.

Things had looked so promising in 2003 when **James Toney** and **Vassiliy Jirov** waged their classic battle, but both fighters immediately headed north, seeking heavyweight riches. It would be nice if Mormeck remained at cruiserweight, but we wouldn't be surprised if he followed Jirov and Toney, leaving the cruiserweight division to remain, in the lyrics of an old Talking Heads tune, "the same as it ever was, the same as it ever was ..."

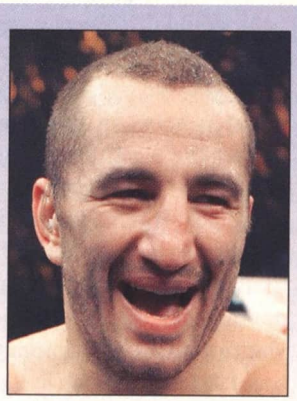
Think About It: This year marks the 25th anniversary of **Marvin Camel's** victory over **Mate Parlov** to become the first official cruiserweight titlist, but aside from **Evander Holyfield**, there haven't been many great names here. **Dwight Qawi** and **Virgil Hill** had some impact, but their best years were at 175 pounds. **Al Cole** and Jirov had respectable turns as IBF titlists, and **Carlos De Leon** won the WBC belt four times. But compare the first quarter century of cruiserweights to the first quarter century of light heavyweights when Bob Fitzsimmons, Philadelphia Jack O'Brien, Jack Dillon, Battling Levinsky, Georges Carpentier, Battling Siki, Mike McTigue, Paul Berlenbach, Jack Delaney, and Tommy Loughran were all champions, and you'll see what we mean when we say cruiser history is sadly lacking in immortals.

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT

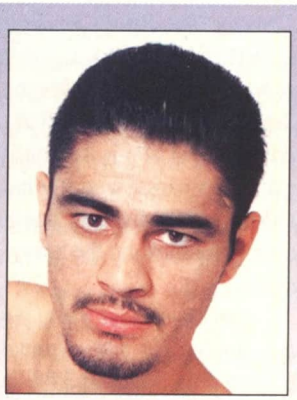
For years, the dream match at 175 was **Roy Jones-Dariusz Michalczewski**. It never happened. Now both guys are pondering their futures after back-to-back surprise losses. Funny how that worked out.

Meanwhile, the 2005 light heavyweight class is all frosting and no cake. The frosting, of course, is **Glen Johnson** and **Antonio Tarver**. These two are the division's yin and yang: Tarver is flashy and verbose; Johnson is rugged and down-to-earth. Johnson is THE RING's champion for now, but by the time you read this, Tarver could be back on top as the rematch is scheduled for June 18. Their compelling first fight was close enough that we may be in store for a classic three-fight series, which is all right with us.

The only problem is that



Frabrice Tiozzo



Julio Gonzalez

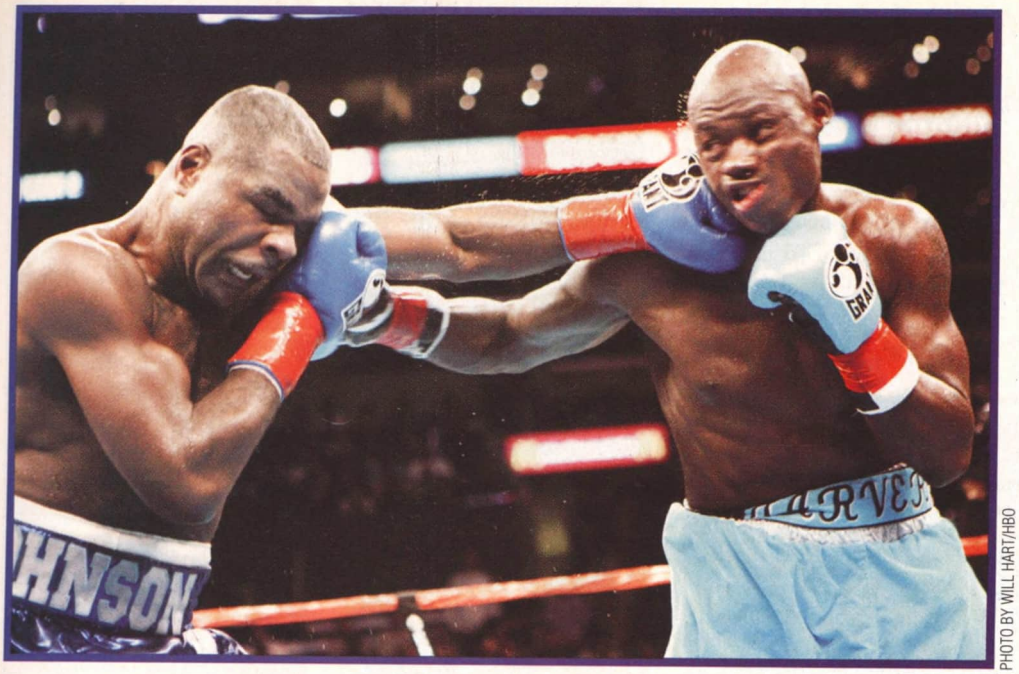


PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Johnson and Tarver exchange blows in light heavy showdown

beneath Johnson and Tarver, the division sags considerably. With Jones' career in question, the majority of the 175-pound class is made up of guys Tarver, Johnson, and Jones have already beaten up. One of them, **Clinton Woods**, finally picked up a title when he stopped **Rico Hoye** for the IBF belt cast off by Johnson when he fought Tarver for the world title.

Among those not already bested by the big three are Hungary's **Zsolt Erdei**, who won't be interviewed by Larry Merchant anytime soon, and France's **Fabrice Tiozzo**, who won the WBA belt from **Silvio Branco** in 2004 and then stopped Michalczewski in February.

Tiozzo hasn't fought in America since 1999 and probably won't visit us in 2005, despite his calling out of Jones. And what sort of guy calls out a consecutive knockout victim, anyway? Maybe he wants **Augie Sanchez** too. Tiozzo will probably stay in Europe and fight Germany's **Thomas Ulrich**, who has had a pretty good run since losing to Johnson in 2001.

Yes, the division needs a shot of adrenaline, but beyond Johnson and Tarver, it will only come when an outsider invades it. **Joe Calzaghe** and **Bernard Hopkins** have both expressed interest in fighting Johnson. But don't hold your breath. Calzaghe isn't a risk taker and B-Hop still has plenty to do at 160.

Think About It: To make a rough comparison, the light heavyweight situation in 2005 is similar to the heavyweight scene of the late-1940s. Joe Louis, like Roy Jones, was a long-reigning champion who was suddenly out of the picture. Meanwhile, Ezzard Charles and Joe Walcott kept fighting each other because there were no other big money contenders. Rocky Marciano eventually rose up and defeated both of them. Perhaps Tarver and Johnson will keep fighting each other for supremacy at 175 until some young buck arrives to shake things up. But who will it be? **Jeff Lacy** perhaps?

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Antonio Tarver

Best Boxer
Antonio Tarver

Most Protected
Tomasz Adamek

Is He Still Around?
Jorge Castro

Matchmaker's Dream
Glen Johnson-Antonio Tarver II

Deserves A Title Shot
Antonio Tarver

Most Fun To Watch
Julio Gonzalez

On The Way Down
David Telesco

Underrated
Julio Gonzalez

Overrated
Stipe Drews

Best Fight In 2004
Glen Johnson W 12
Antonio Tarver

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHT

If **Joe Calzaghe** had fought the recently retired **Sven Ottke** and won, the Welsh super middleweights would have had a RING champion. But Calzaghe and Ottke were content to lord over their little fiefdoms, and the boxing world was denied. Calzaghe remains a ratings magnet for Sky television, but has been knocked down in two of his last three fights. He's either showing his age or he's showing a lack of concentration.

But even without a RING champ, this division is interesting, boasting a colorful international cast. Two of the best, Denmark's **Mikkel Kessler** and Australia's **Anthony Mundine**, are scheduled to meet in July. Some of the shine has worn off of Mundine after last year's loss to **Manny Siaca**, who in turn lost to Kessler, but he's still a factor at 168 (unless he pursues his rugby dream).

We'll probably raise some eyebrows by choosing Germany's **Markus Beyer** as this division's "Most Fun To Watch," but the three-time WBC title winner makes every fight a tightrope act. His recent win over Aussie **Danny Green** was a perfect example—a comfortable points win was nearly ruined in the final round when Green wobbled him severely. In fact, Beyer has been dropped or badly hurt in five of his last six fights. He's not fun the way Micky Ward was fun, but there's something amusing about this soft-punching German southpaw who consults a psychologist before every fight. And don't let Beyer's lack of power taint your perception of the super middleweights. The top 10 have the highest knockout rate of any weight class, with 70 percent of their wins coming early.

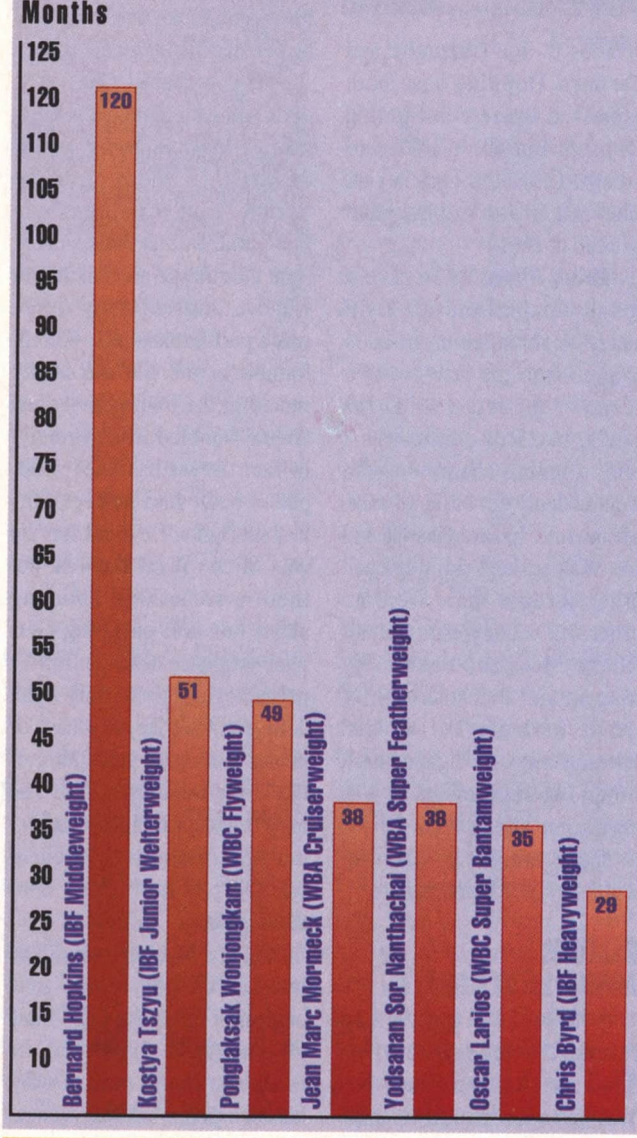
The best American at the weight, **Jeff Lacy**, had a great campaign since the last "State Of The Game." Granted, he takes too many punches for his own good, but his strength was enough to earn him wins

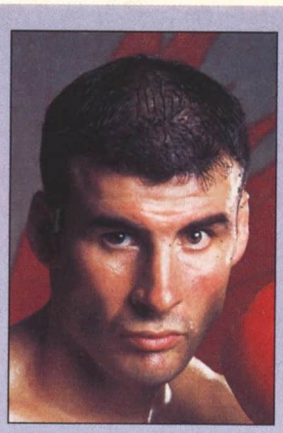
over **Syd Vanderpool**, **Omar Sheika**, and **Rubin Williams**. There is talk that he'll meet Calzaghe, but Lacy had better move quickly—his weightlifter's physique won't allow him to remain at 168 for long. Filling out the division are veterans **Mads Larsen** and **Robin Reid**. Former titlist Reid scored well in '04 by beating U.K. prospect **Brian Magee**.

Think About It: Nearly 30 years after he quit boxing, we still talk about middleweight legend Carlos Monzon, and it's not only because of his oft-mentioned 14 defenses. Monzon was a globetrotter, traveling the world and fighting all comers. Would we still talk about him if he'd stayed in Argentina and fought only South American fighters? No. We know airport security is tough these days, but great fighters have to travel. Kudos to Kessler for agreeing to go to Sydney to fight Mundine. Fighters in other divisions should take note. Sure, there's the risk of losing a hometown decision, but it's worse to be known as a fighter who never leaves home.

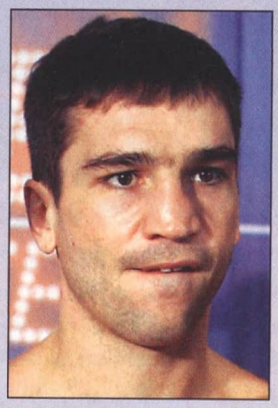
LONGEST-REIGNING CHAMPIONS

The graph below illustrates the game's most established titlists, along with the number of consecutive months each has held the title. Gone from last year's list are Roy Jones, Irene Pacheco, Masamori Tokuyama, Sven Ottke, and Veeraphol Sahaprom. Some fighters think fighting in different weight classes shows versatility, but the single most impressive stat in boxing today is Bernard Hopkins' 120 months as a titleholder in one division. (B-Hop has also held the WBC belt for 48 months, which would have been good for fourth place here.)

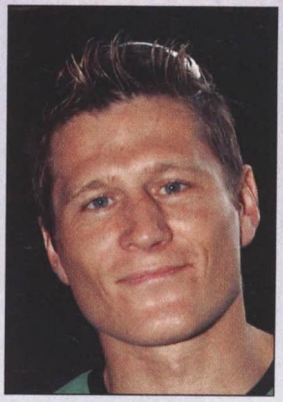




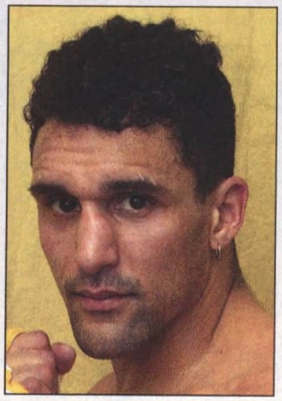
Joe Calzaghe



Markus Beyer



Danny Green



Scott Pemberton

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHT

Best Puncher
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Is He Still Around?
Julio Cesar Vasquez

Matchmaker's Dream
Joe Calzaghe-Jeff Lacy

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Markus Beyer

On The Way Down
Charles Brewer

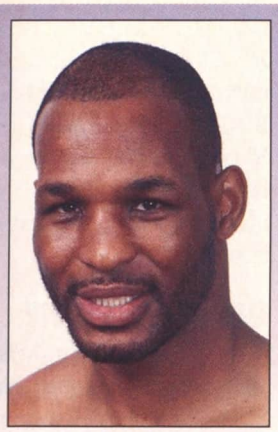
Underrated
Robin Reid

Overrated
Brian Magee

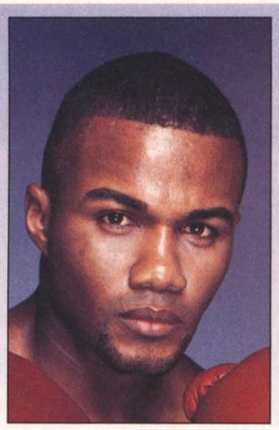
Best Fight In 2004
Scott Pemberton KO 10 Omar Sheika

MIDDLEWEIGHT

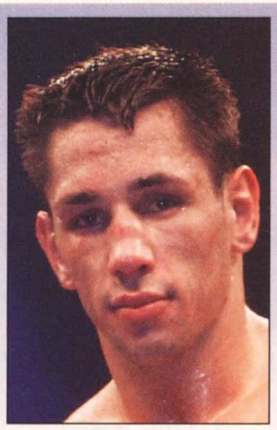
After beating **Oscar De La Hoya**, **Bernard Hopkins** inherited a little bit of Oscar's cache—these days everyone is calling him out, from Lacy to Calzaghe to **Kassim Ouma**. As we went to press, the 40-year-old champion was looking for a summer opponent, and the likely candidate was



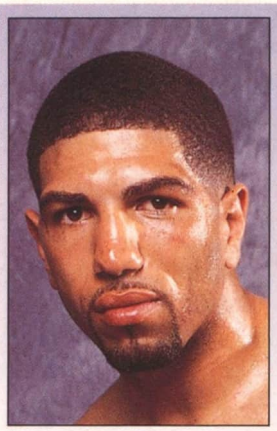
Bernard Hopkins



Felix Trinidad



Felix Sturm



Winky Wright

Jermain Taylor. Whether Taylor is ready to fight the champ, or if the fight will even happen, is unknown, but even if the 2000 Olympian is still green, he has a superlative left jab that would make the fight interesting. Beyond that, Hopkins is probably waiting for the outcome of the **Felix Trinidad-Winky Wright** bout in May. A rematch with Trinidad is what most people want, from both commercial and historical perspectives. A fight between Hopkins and Wright would be entertaining for hardcore fans of the Sweet Science, but it wouldn't attract the mainstream.

Should Hopkins stick to his promise and retire as champion next year, the remaining contenders will fight over his discarded alphabet belts like hyenas pouncing on a zebra carcass. Those fighters may include **Sam Soliman**, **Kingsley Ikeke**, German banger **Arthur Abraham**, and perhaps recycled Hopkins' victim **Howard Eastman**. New Zealand's **Maselino Masoe** has scored a lot of knockouts, but has been feasting on weak opponents. His 2004 kayo of **Evans Ashira** looks good on paper, but Ashira hadn't fought anyone of note, either.

De La Hoya did one important thing during his stint at 160—he unwittingly brought **Felix Sturm** into the spotlight. Since losing to De La Hoya, the classy Sturm has won three in a row, including kayo wins over **Hassine Cherifi** and **Bert Schenk**.

Think About It: Hopkins seems to have taken on a characteristic of his old rival, Roy Jones, in that he has become so masterful that his fights are becoming a bit dull. This could be bad news for Golden Boy Promotions, since they probably plan to showcase Hopkins on pay-per-view until he retires. But let's enjoy him while we have him, because the future of the middleweights looks messy without him.

MIDDLEWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Felix Trinidad

Best Boxer
Bernard Hopkins

Most Protected
Maselino Masoe

Is He Still Around?
Gianfranco Rosi

Matchmaker's Dream
Bernard Hopkins-Felix Trinidad II

Deserves A Title Shot
Felix Sturm

Most Fun To Watch
Felix Trinidad

On The Way Down
Bert Schenk

Underrated
Sam Soliman

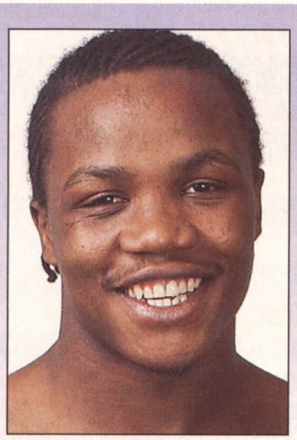
Overrated
Evans Ashira

Best Fight Of 2004
Felix Trinidad KO 8 Ricardo Mayorga

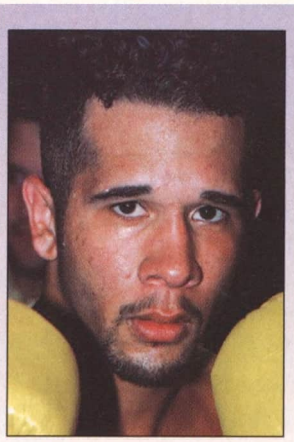
JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHT

At first glance, this division seems loaded with talent, but a closer look reveals a weight class perched precariously on a cliff. Champ **Winky Wright** is testing his luck at 160 pounds; **Shane Mosley** is now fighting at 147; **Daniel Santos**, although he fought more aggressively than usual last year against **Antonio Margarito**, isn't a fan favorite and is struggling with his weight; **Verno Phillips** and **Bronco McKart** have seen better days; **Rodney Jones** is a 36-year-old southpaw with no flair; **Travis Simms** may be stuck in Don King's pay-per-view purgatory; our lasting impression of **Alejandro Garcia** is of him getting cold-cocked by Simms; **Kofi Jantuah** was beaten so easily by **Kassim Ouma** last year that he went from being the division's biggest threat to an also-ran overnight; **Javier Castillejo** hasn't fought outside of Spain since losing to **Oscar De La Hoya** in 2001; and **J.C. Candelo**, who was in the top 10 last year, has lost three in a row.

But for those who see the glass half-full, Ouma may be exciting enough to keep the division afloat even as it's falling apart. His 2004 was highlighted by wins over Phillips and Candelo, then he



Kassim Ouma



Daniel Santos

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Kofi Jantuah

Best Boxer
Winky Wright

Most Protected
Sergio Gabriel Martinez

Is He Still Around?
Hector Camacho Jr.

Matchmaker's Dream
Winky Wright-Kassim Ouma

Deserves A Title Shot
Kassim Ouma

Most Fun To Watch
Kassim Ouma

On The Way Down
Bronco McKart

Underrated
Daniel Santos

Overrated
Tokunbo Olajide

Best Fight In 2004
Daniel Santos Tech. Win 9
Antonio Margarito

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Vargas returned to action with by beating tough Raymond Joval

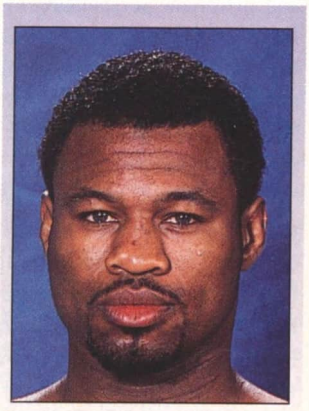
beat Jantuah to open 2005, and now he's waiting, along with the rest of us, to see how Wright performs against Felix Trinidad. **Roman Karmazin** has been mentioned as an opponent for Ouma this summer. And even though they're no longer undefeated, Garcia and Jantuah are heavy-handed fighters who can still provide some fireworks. And **Marco Antonio Rubio**, who was blown out in one by Jantuah last year, is another stiff puncher who shouldn't be dismissed just yet.

Comebacking **Fernando Vargas** is scheduled to meet Castillejo this summer. And as we went to press, the recently un-retired **Ricardo Mayorga** was preparing to return, and 154 pounds was his target weight. If "El Matador" can regain his focus and keep his personal life in order, he may bring this division the jolt it needs. Mayorga versus Ouma, Jantuah, or Vargas would be great for HBO or Showtime. Smoke 'em if you got 'em.

Think About It: No wonder Mosley went back to 147. Joe Goossen, who trained Mosley for his rematch with Wright, openly admits Mosley can't deal with southpaws, and the junior middleweights are crawling with left-handers (Wright, Ouma, Santos, Simms, Jones, and, just outside the rankings, **Sergio Martinez**). Besides, Shane's old rival **Vernon Forrest** may be landing at junior middle soon, giving Mosley even less room to breathe at 154 pounds.

WELTERWEIGHT

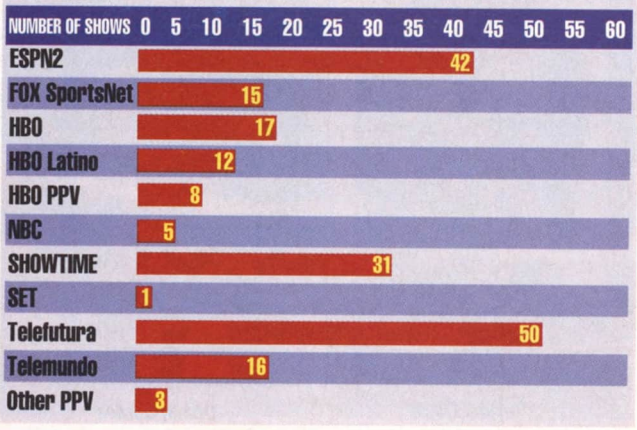
The welterweight division was in a stupor for much of 2004. **Cory Spinks** wasn't an exciting champion and number-one contender **Antonio Margarito** jumped up, temporarily, to 154. But things are looking up. **Zab Judah** TKO'd Spinks in January for the championship and Margarito returned to welter and cemented his status as the leading contender by stopping previously undefeated slugger **Kermit Cintron**. Moreover, **Oscar De La Hoya** announced that he's returning to 147. A bout between the new champ and "The Golden Boy" should provide

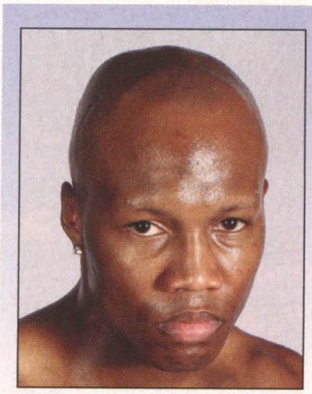


Shane Mosley

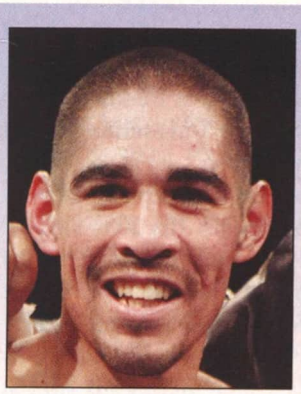
BOXING ON TV

*Below is a breakdown of how much boxing each network provided in 2004. Although ESPN cut back on its boxing schedule, there wasn't a significant dropoff in the total number of shows from all networks (212 in 2003; 200 in 2004). Also worth noting, although not accounted for here are the growing number of syndicated boxing programs (**Ballroom Boxing**, **Broadway Boxing**, **Heavyweight Heroes**, and **Guilty Boxing Inc.**). What we'd really like to see is a syndicated show featuring some of the top European fighters, perhaps a "Best Of Sky" program that could be wedged into the Australian-rules-football channel. ("Other PPV" refers to any pay-per-views that were not seen on HBO PPV or SET.)*





Zab Judah



Antonio Margarito

WELTERWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Zab Judah

Best Boxer
Zab Judah

Most Protected
Antonio Mesquita

Is He Still Around?
Ivan Robinson

Matchmaker's Dream
Zab Judah-Oscar De La Hoya

Deserves A Title Shot
Antonio Margarito

Most Fun To Watch
Antonio Margarito

On The Way Down
Steve Quinones

Underrated
Carlos Baldomir

Overrated
David Barnes

Best Fight In 2004
Cory Spinks W 12 Zab Judah

the welters with a shot of instant glamour.

De La Hoya's visit to 160 was financially lucrative, but an artistic failure. At 147, he'll be closer to the Oscar we remember, a tall fighter with a long reach and some power. His dream scenario probably has him beating Judah for the title and then making one last run at **Shane Mosley**, who also made a successful return to 147 by outpointing **David Estrada**. Oscar's dreams have been dashed before, but we can never underestimate his competitive fires. Put it all together and the division could be one of boxing's hottest for the next year or two.

European fighters like **Thomas Damgaard** and **Jawaid Khaliq**, and North American contenders **Luis Collazo**, **Manuel Gomez**, **Cosme Rivera** (Judah's next challenger), and **Jose Antonio Rivera**, can fill TV slots on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. **Carlos Baldomir** is the division's most well-traveled journeyman. He's no puncher, but he has enough ring savvy to trouble anyone. The welters had better look sharp because Oscar is coming to town. Will there be a trickle-down effect for the fighters below Oscar, Zab, and Sugar Shane? Maybe not. We can't imagine De La Hoya staying at welter for long, either, and when he leaves, the division may go back to being a ghost town.

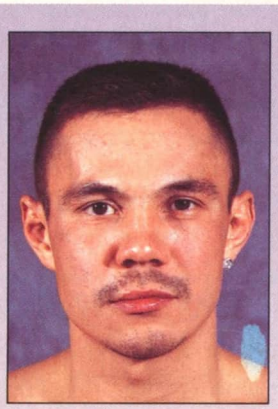
Think About It: They don't call it The Spinks Jinx for nothing. When Spinks lost to Judah in front of his St. Louis fans, he was carrying on the family tradition of beating the odds one day and being humiliated the next. Unfortunately for Spinks, he's the odd man out this year. He's not marketable enough to attract De La Hoya's attention, too feather-fisted to draw a crowd outside of St. Louis, and his only hope, a rubber match with Judah, won't happen as long as the new champ can line up fights with Mosley or De La Hoya.

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHT

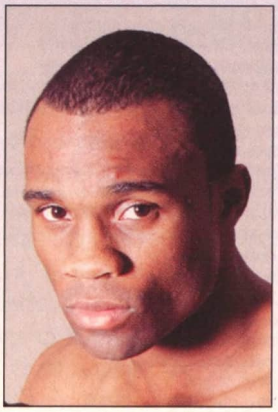
This division is like the New York Yankees, stocked to the ceiling with talent and more great ones keep joining up. But also like the Yankees, there's a lot of ego here. Lucky for us, there are two mega-fights in the works that will make up for how quiet things were last year.

Champ **Kostya Tzsyu** is putting his laurels on the line against England's **Ricky Hatton** in June. The general feeling is that Tszyu will emerge victorious, but Hatton looked like a wrecking machine against **Ray Oliveira** last winter, and since the fight will be in the U.K., Hatton will have a hometown advantage. But even if Hatton loses, he'll still be a presence in the division. Hatton's problem is his weight, as evidenced by a recent Showtime interview where he looked like a mini George Chuvalo.

If Tszyu-Hatton isn't enough for you, **Floyd Mayweather** and **Arturo Gatti** are scheduled to meet on pay-per-view three weeks later. Both fighters have changed their styles in recent outings, with Gatti boxing more and Mayweather punching more, making their eventual battle more interesting. We'd have to pick the younger, faster Mayweather in this one. Gatti's longevity is admirable, but he's basically an old pair of shoes that has been re-soled; it's only a matter of time before he comes apart. But should Gatti win, there won't be enough confetti in Atlantic City to cover the postfight celebration.



Kostya Tszyu



Vivian Harris

June will also be a big month for **Miguel Cotto,** who is scheduled to face the man who defeated him in the 2000 Sydney Olympics, **Muhammad Abdullaev**. Cotto struggled against **DeMarcus Corley** in his most recent fight, but he eventually stopped Corley and remains the division's best young warrior. Unfortunately, he may outgrow the weight class before he can meet any of the elite 140-pounders. And that would be a shame because we'd love to see him tested some more here, ideally against one of the division's avoided danger men, **Vivian Harris** or **Junior Witter.**

Think About It: We may daydream about Tszyu against the other great junior welterweights, but since he's a Showtime fighter and the bulk of the division is on HBO, we

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Kostya Tszyu

Best Boxer
Floyd Mayweather

Most Protected
Ted Bami

Is He Still Around?
Darryl Tyson

Matchmaker's Dream
Arturo Gatti-Miguel Cotto

Deserves A Title Shot
Arturo Gatti

Most Fun To Watch
Ricky Hatton

On The Way Down
Cesar Bazan

Underrated
Vivian Harris

Overrated
Francisco Bojado

Best Fight In 2004
Craig Weber D 12
Rogelio Castaneda

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Castillo clocks Lazcano with a left en route to winning lightweight title

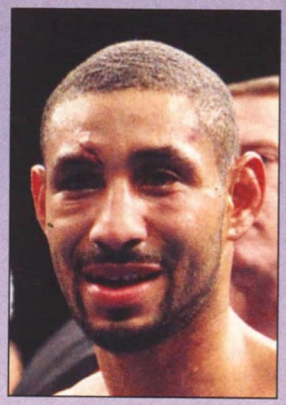
may not see those fights. The two networks compromised for the Lewis-Tyson fight of 2002, but they're not likely to go through the same headaches for a pair of 140-pounders known only to boxing junkies. So unless Tszyu-Hatton spawns a rematch, the most likely opponent for Tszyu may be lightweight champ **Jose Luis Castillo**, who says Showtime has already promised him Tszyu, provided Castillo gets past **Diego Corrales** in May.

LIGHTWEIGHT

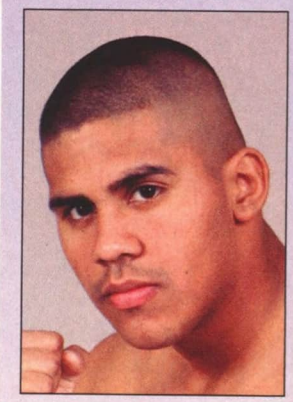
Last year at this time we were lamenting the departures of **Floyd Mayweather**, **Leonard Dorin**, and **Paul Spadafora**. But the lightweights hardly missed them. In fact, the current lineup is one of the strongest in boxing. So why are the lightweights a great class? The formula is simple: lots of talent, little ego. They have the most experienced top 10 in boxing, combining for a total of 430 fights. They also have the second highest knockout percentage, just behind the super middleweights. If the junior welterweights are the Yankees, perhaps the lightweights are the Red Sox, a bunch of hardworking guys ready to steal the spotlight for themselves.

THE RING couldn't have asked for a better champion than **Jose Luis Castillo**. First he defeated **Juan Lazcano** for the vacant RING title, and then he out-hustled **Joel Casamayor** in December. In March, he overpowered **Julio Diaz**, and he was scheduled to defend against the hard-hitting **Diego Corrales** in May. Unfortunately, the winner will probably head to junior welterweight as soon as his hand is raised. Corrales' frame could carry the extra weight, and Castillo has already fought a few times at 147.

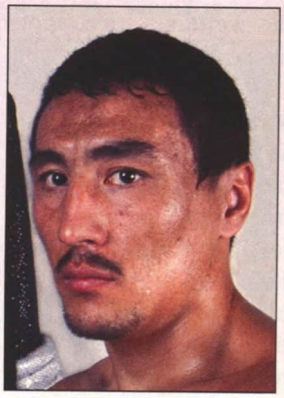
If those two should depart, the rest of the class is still solid. **Juan Diaz** continues to improve. **Acelino Freitas** and Casamayor are rebounding from tough years, but mix and match any of the names mentioned here and you're guaranteed a good bout, unless Freitas decides to stay in Brazil and fight unknowns, which is a distinct possibility. Even **Erik Morales** is considering a move to 135. If Lazcano can get his act together (he and promoter De La Hoya haven't seen eye to eye lately) he'd be in the 135-pound mix too.



Diego Corrales



Juan Diaz



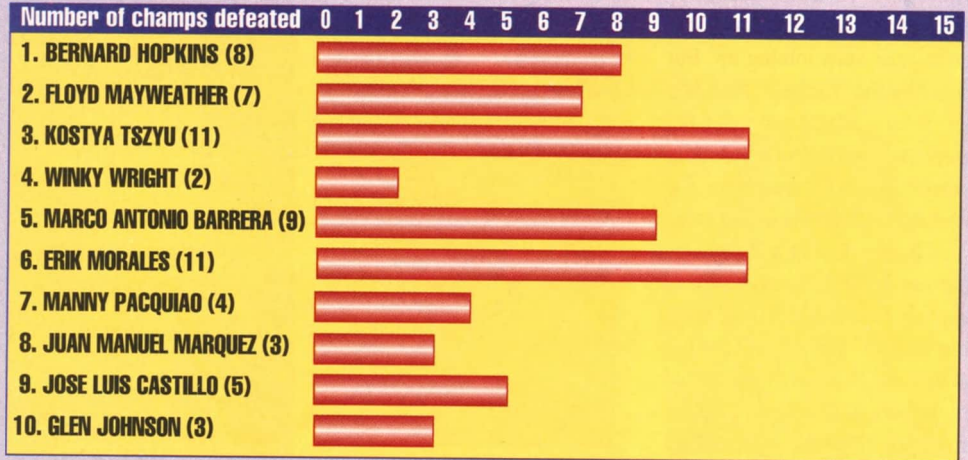
Almazbek Raiymkulov

Javier Jauregui, **Julien Lorcy**, and **Artur Grigorian** are all still rated, as is the iron-willed **Lakva Sim**; of the four, we'll bet Jauregui's connection with Golden Boy Promotions lands him at least one big fight in '05.

Think About It: Casamayor has the rare distinction of being both "Most Overrated" and "Most Underrated" in the division sidebar. He gets the

TITLISTS vs. TITLISTS

One of the ways to calculate a fighter's worth is to count the number of champions or titlists he's defeated. Here's how THE RING's pound-for-pound top 10 stack up:



LIGHTWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Diego Corrales

Best Boxer
Joel Casamayor

Most Protected
Matt Zegan

Is He Still Around?
Dorin Spivey

Matchmaker's Dream
Juan Diaz-Juan Lazcano

Deserves A Title Shot
Juan Diaz

Most Fun To Watch
Diego Corrales

On The Way Down
Yoni Vargas

Underrated
Joel Casamayor

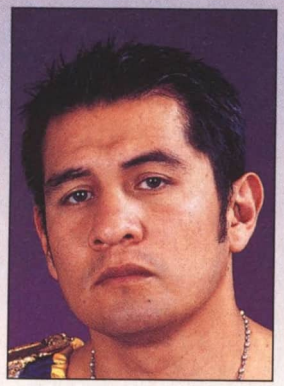
Overrated
Joel Casamayor

Best Fight In 2004
Ebo Elder KO 12
Courtney Burton

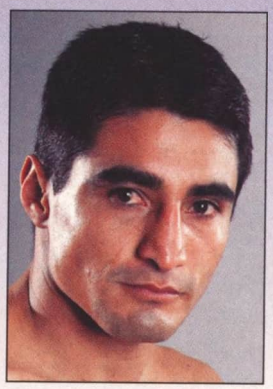
former because he's failed to live up to his initial hype, but gets the latter for still being dangerous. In June he will face undefeated sensation **Almazbek Raiymkulov** ("Kid Diamond") at Madison Square Garden on the undercard of Cotto-Abdullaev. That's a dangerous fight for the Cuban southpaw, but a win resurrects his career. A loss will do the opposite.

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHT

Erik Morales, **Marco Antonio Barrera**, and **Manny Pacquiao** have taken turns at being on top during the last year-and-a-half. They've also had up-close looks at the bottom. If Pac-Man intends to stay at 130, the three fighters might be locked in a sort of Ali-Frazier-Foreman triangle, and may fight each other at least once more. Or maybe



Marco Antonio Barrera



Erik Morales

Morales, who has already accomplished a lot at 130, will try 135, Pac-Man will head back to 126, and WBC titlist Barrera, who demolished **Mzonke Fana** in April, will rule the junior lightweights. Right now it's hard to say. But it's great to imagine them in the same weight class for a while. It's not often we see three possible first-ballot Hall of Famers in one division.

In the middle of the pack are veterans **Jesus Chavez** and **Carlos Hernandez**, who were scheduled to meet in May. These two aren't quite at the elite level, but we'll bet their fight was a scorcher. Since both are already victims of Morales, perhaps the winner will have the misfortune of facing Barrera.

Australia's **Robbie Peden** proved his worth with two knockout wins over **Nate Campbell** in the past year, and **Jorge Barrios** upped his stock with a surprisingly easy stoppage of young **Mike Anchondo**. Thailand's **Yodsanan Nanthachai**, who hasn't lost since 1994, was scheduled to defend the WBA title against **Vincent Mosquera** April 30 at MSG.

The top 10 junior lightweights combine for a staggering .945 winning percentage. Forget pound-for-pound. Man-for-man, this group of fighters is the strongest in boxing. And we didn't even count Pacquiao for these stats,

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Erik Morales

Best Boxer
Marco Antonio Barrera

Most Protected
Steven Luevano

Is He Still Around?
Cesar Soto

Matchmaker's Dream
Marco Antonio Barrera-Erik Morales IV

Deserves A Title Shot
Erik Morales

Most Fun To Watch
Erik Morales

On The Way Down
Nate Campbell

Underrated
Jesus Chavez

Overrated
Cassius Baloyi

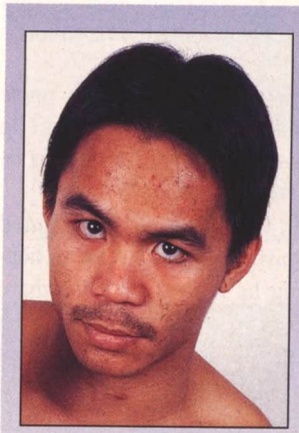
Best Fight In 2004
Marco Antonio Barrera W 12
Erik Morales

because we're still calling him a featherweight until he declares otherwise.

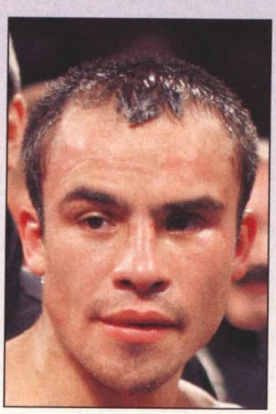
Think About It: Perhaps the boxing world would have been better served if Pacquiao had defeated Morales in March. Pac-Man has star wattage to burn, a fun personality, and, unlike the deadpan Morales, has learned to speak English. But Morales was the better fighter, and the win gives "El Terrible" some bragging rights in Mexico since Pacquiao so soundly defeated Barrera in 2003. Still, no matter whom Morales beats, we sense that he'll always be Roger Maris to Barrera's Mickey Mantle. And that, more than anything else, is at the root of their long-running feud.

FEATHERWEIGHT

For **Manny Pacquiao** to be 1-1-1 (1) against **Marco Antonio Barrera**, **Juan Manuel Marquez**, and **Erik Morales** is impressive enough, but that a Filipino fighter was willing to come to America and fight the best in boxing is downright incredible, considering most titlists from that part of the world are content to stay home. If other Asian titlists follow Pac-Man's lead, we might remember Pacquiao not only for his exciting fights, but



Manny Pacquiao



Juan Manuel Marquez

FEATHERWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Manny Pacquiao

Best Boxer
Juan Manuel Marquez

Most Protected
Nicky Cook

Is He Still Around?
Kevin Kelley

Matchmaker's Dream
Manny Pacquiao-Juan Manuel Marquez II

Deserves A Title Shot
Rocky Juarez

Most Fun to Watch
Manny Pacquiao

On The Way Down
Guty Espadas

Underrated
Victor Polo

Overrated
Spend Abazi

Best Fight In 2004
Manny Pacquiao D 12 Juan Manuel Marquez

PHOTO BY ALEX LIVESEY/GETTY IMAGES

Chi batters Brodie to win WBC featherweight belt

also for inspiring a more adventurous attitude among Asian fighters. That would be quite a legacy.

Pacquiao has mentioned staying at 130, but we're hoping he returns to 126, where he's recognized as champion by THE RING. Sure, he'll go where the money is, but at featherweight he still packs a punch and there are plenty of fights for him here. Right now, Manny is like a rookie pitcher who started out well, but is easier to hit now that the league has had a look at him. It's up to him to become less predictable. There's also some controversy involving Pacquiao's promoter, Murad Muhammad, who allegedly takes an awfully big cut of Pacquiao's paycheck, even though Pac-Man is the one with the cuts on his face.

While we're busy pondering Pacquiao's future, we also have questions about everyone else in the top 10. Is Marquez a great fighter who can sometimes be dull, or is he a dull fighter who can sometimes be great? Will **Rocky Juarez** still seem this good when he meets better competition? Is **In Jin Chi** as tough as he seems to be, or is he just fortunate to be fighting overseas? We will get answers to the last two questions in July when Juarez and Chi are scheduled to clash.

Will **Scott Harrison** ever defend the belt outside of Scotland? And why does he have such problems with tall, rangy veterans, first losing to **Manuel Medina** in '03 and recently being held to a draw by **Victor Polo**? Is Indonesia's **Chris John** for real? Can **Michael Brodie** bounce back from the beating he took last year from Chi?

Think About It: Seven years ago, Marquez was already a top-rated featherweight. Barrera and Morales were still fighting at junior feather back then. They have since moved up to 130, yet Marquez stays at 126. Is that dedication or is it simply another example of Marquez' conservative, sometimes bland nature? We'd like to see him roll the dice at 130 against his Mexican counterparts. A Barrera-Marquez ticket sounds like a dream fight for a fan of classy boxing.

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHT

Hall of Fame writer W.C. Heinz once described a fighter by saying, "He's as good as a fighter can be without being great." That could describe division leader and WBC boss **Oscar Larios**. His busy schedule (four fights last year, and one already in '05) is admirable, and his fights are usually entertain-

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

Larios squashes McCullough's face in a thriller

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Joan Guzman

Best Boxer
Oscar Larios

Most Protected
Sod Looknongyangtoy

Is He Still Around?
Francisco Tejedor

Matchmaker's Dream
Oscar Larios-Joan Guzman

Deserves A Title Shot
Celestino Cabellero

Most Fun To Watch
Daniel Ponce-DeLeon

On The Way Down
Emmanuel Lucero

Underrated
Israel Vazquez

Overrated
Yoddamrong Sithyodthong

Best Fight In 2004
Israel Vazquez KO 12 Jose Luis Valbuena

ing, but he's not Must See TV.

The 122-pound class has undergone the most dramatic makeover of any division, involving six new faces in their top 10 since last year, but like Larios, they all fall into the same good-but-not-great category. There was hope that **Joan Guzman** and **Daniel Ponce-DeLeon** would add some excitement to the group, but management trouble has kept Guzman from fighting frequently in '04, while Ponce-De Leon revealed his limitations in a recent loss to **Celestino Caballero**.

France's **Mahyar Monshipour**, who has a considerable reputation among European fans, defended the WBA title twice last year. IBF titlist **Israel Vazquez** is probably hoping for a rubber match with Larios. The Larios-Vazquez bout might crown a RING champion, but Larios is already grumbling about jumping to a higher weight class. There has also been serious talk about Larios fighting Guzman, and even **Johnny Tapia**, but neither fight will happen soon, as Larios injured his arm during his bout with **Wayne McCullough** and is out of commission until he's healed.

It's nice to see McCullough back in the ring, but at age 34, we can't predict too much more success for "The Pocket Rocket." Still, his popularity with American cable networks means he'll make at least one more run for an alphabet title. Thailand's **Yoddamrong Sithyodthong** lost to Monshipour last year, so he'll probably go back to fighting inexperienced unknowns in Bangkok.

Think About It: Ponce-De Leon's fans may have been disappointed when he lost to Caballero, but his flaws had been more apparent with each fight. He'd looked awkward in November against **Julio Gamboa** before stopping him with a bodyshot, and in January, he had no clue how to fight the taller, more mobile Caballero. But during the 12th round, Ponce-De Leon showed why he earned the "Most Fun" accolade in our sidebar. With his eyes puffed up and hopelessly behind on points, he stormed out for the final round trying for a knockout. He nearly got it too. Hopefully, he learned from the loss and will evolve into a better fighter. But we'll still tune in, even if he remains an awkward, flat-footed slugger.

BANTAMWEIGHT

This weight class has at least one star with commercial potential, and that's division leader **Rafael Marquez**. He stopped three opponents in dramatic fashion last year, knocking one of them, **Heriberto Ruiz**, clear out of the ratings. Near the bottom of THE RING'S top 10 is **Jhonny Gonzalez**, a good puncher who, while not as polished as Marquez, cracks nearly as hard (going into his recent decision win over **Adonis Rivas**, he had a 12-fight kayo streak going). His November '04 bout with **Gabriel Elizondo** was a two-round war. Gonzalez went down in the first, but dropped Elizondo four times in the second before the bout was stopped. When it was over, Elizondo looked like Carmen Basilio after 15 rounds with Ray Robinson. Both Gonzalez and Marquez have vulnerable chins, so a bout between them would feature plenty of knockdowns and shifts in momentum. Let's hope it happens, because aside from them, the division is mostly made up of overachieving journeymen and untested prospects.

One interesting event in 2004 involved Thailand's **Ratanachai Vorapin**, a veteran of nearly 70 bouts, who, aside from a win over **Danny Romero** in 2001, habitually lost big fights. But in May of last year, Vorapin went against his usual habit and defeated **Cruz Carvajal** for the WBO belt. Granted, the WBO strap is lightly regarded, but after two failures to win IBF belts (from **Tim Austin** in '01 and

Veerapol Sahaprom

PHOTO BY CHRIS POLK/HBO

Rafael Marquez made quick work of Peter Frissina

BANTAMWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Rafael Marquez

Best Boxer
Rafael Marquez

Most Protected
Poonsawat Kratingdaenggym

Is He Still Around?
Oscar Andrade

Matchmaker's Dream
Rafael Marquez-Jhonny Gonzalez

Deserves A Title Shot
Genaro Garcia

Most Fun To Watch
Rafael Marquez

On The Way Down
David Guerault

Underrated
Silence Mabuza

Overrated
Veerapol Sahaprom

Best Fight In 2004
Jhonny Gonzalez KO 2
Gabriel Elizondo

Mark Johnson in '99), Vorapin finally joined countryman **Veerapol Sahaprom** near the top of the bantamweight division. But after six years and 14 defenses of the WBC belt, Sahaprom lost the title in April to the soft-punching, inexperienced **Hozumi Hasegawa**. At age 36, and struggling with the scales, Sahaprom was ready to be taken.

Completing the top 10 are **Toshioka Nishioka**, Mexican veterans **Genaro Garcia** and **Ricardo Vargas**, new WBA titlist **Wladimir Sidorenko** of Germany, and South Africa's **Silence Mabuza**. Like last year, there are no American names among the top bantams.

Think About It: WBA titleholder **Johnny Bredahl** retired last year after defeating **Nobuaki Naka**. It was Bredahl's third defense of a title he won by beating **Eidy Moya** in '02, and his second turn as a belt owner, having held the WBO junior bantam title from 1992-'94. His final record was a sparkling 55-2 (26), but the Hall of Fame isn't likely to call his name any time soon. The two best opponents Bredahl faced, McCullough and **Paulie Ayala**, defeated him. Bredahl scored a win over Carvajal, but at the time Carvajal was in the middle of a major losing streak. So while Bredahl was an admirable fighter with a large following in Copenhagen, he's not bound for the IBHOF and his absence will hardly be noticed in this neck of the woods.

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHT

You had to appreciate WBA king **Martin Castillo's** easy points win over the highly regarded **Eric Morel** in March. It wasn't a thriller, but the win cemented Castillo as the division's top man. Last year, he easily outpointed the hard-punching **Alexander Munoz** and scored a dramatic, come-from-behind knockout of **Hideyasu Ishihara**, and now he outboxes an ex-Olympian who was in pound-for-pound contention not long ago. Castillo may not fight his way off of pay-per-view undercards, but he is as good as it gets at 115. The only loss on his record was on cuts to **Felix Machado**, and many thought that "El Gallito" deserved that technical decision.

Fernando Montiel dismantled **Ivan Hernandez** in April, winning the WBO belt and putting himself back in the junior bantam picture. Hernandez had looked impressive beating **Mark Johnson** last year, but Montiel, who had looked tentative against Johnson, showed once again why boxing is an unpredictable sport. IBF king **Luis Perez**, who looked so good in 2003 by twice beating Machado, was inactive in 2004, but was slated to return to action and defend against **Luis Bolano** on April 30 on the Ruiz-

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Alexander Munoz

Best Boxer
Martin Castillo

Most Protected
Luis Maldonado

Is He Still Around?
Oscar Arciniega

Matchmaker's Dream
Martin Castillo-Luis Perez

Deserves A Title Shot
Jose Navarro

Most Fun To Watch
Katsushige Kawashima

On The Way Down
Juan Alfonso Keb-Baas

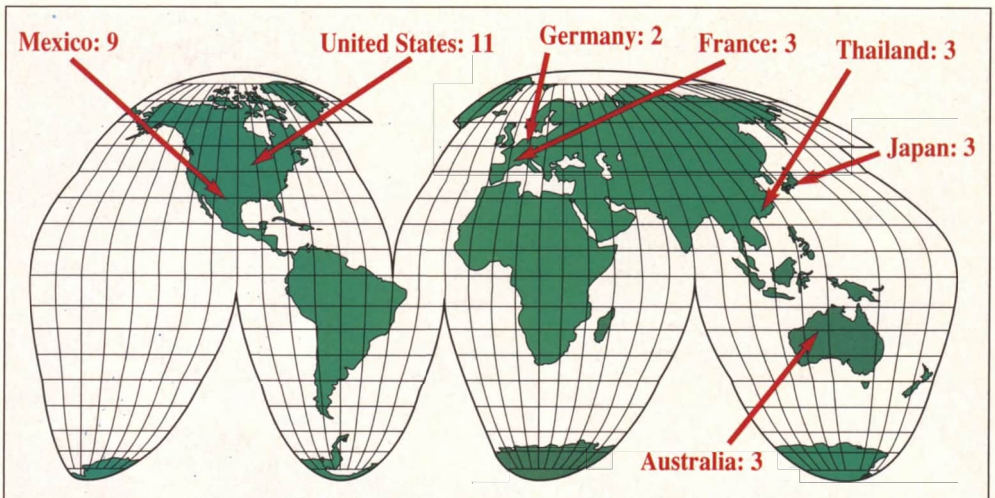
Underrated
Fernando Montiel

Overrated
Damaen Kelly

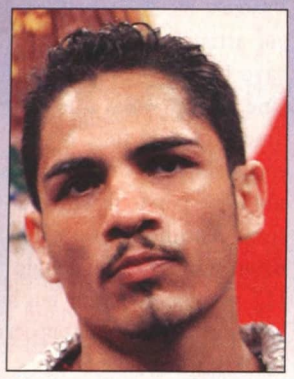
Best Fight In 2004
Ivan Hernandez KO 8
Mark Johnson

THE CHAMPS AND TITLISTS BY COUNTRIES

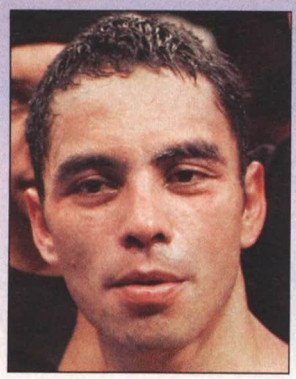
Eight years ago America had 21 titles to Mexico's three. Now it's practically even at 11 for the U.S. and nine for Mexico. And when you consider that four of the so-called American titleholders were actually born in other countries but came to the U.S. to pursue boxing, the truth becomes clear: There aren't many born and raised American champs these days. Also, note THE RING's stance on refusing to recognize multiple WBA or WBC tilists in the same division. For example, we'll recognize WBA "super" champ Zab Judah, but not "regular" titlist Luis Collazo. Ditto for "interim" champs.



8 countries tied with 1: •Indonesia •Ukraine •Venezuela •South Korea •Denmark •Nicaragua •England •Philippines



Martin Castillo



Fernando Montiel

Toney card at Madison Square Garden. Depending on how THE RING ratings shake out, Perez and Castillo could one day meet for the world title.

Katsushige Kawashima caused a stir in Japan last year when he avenged an earlier loss and stopped long-reigning **Masamori Tokuyama** in one round to snare the WBC strap. Kawashima and Tokuyama are scheduled for a rubber match this summer. Casting a shadow over Kawashima's recent success is the fact that 2000 U.S. Olympian **Jose Navarro** went to Japan in January and lost a highly disputed split decision to the wild-swinging beltholder. Hopefully, Navarro will fight the winner of Kawashima-Tokuyama III.

There's no shortage of good fights to come at 115, even if most of them won't be seen outside of PPV undercards or Telefutura shows.

Think About It: This year marks the silver anniversary of the junior bantam class, but unlike the cruiserweights, we've seen many great ones at 115, the two best being **Khaosai Galaxy** and **Johnny Tapia**. Galaxy defended the WBA title 19 times during a seven-year reign, and his opponents weren't all easy. His victims included a half-dozen fighters who would go on to win alphabet belts. As for Tapia, he defended the WBO belt 13 times and also snatched the IBF strap along the way by beating **Danny Romero**. Honorable mention: titlists **Sung Kil Moon** (nine defenses), **Gilberto Roman** (11 defenses over two reigns), **Jiro Watanabe** (11 defenses), and **"Too Sharp" Johnson** (only three defenses over two reigns, but too talented to be left out).

FLYWEIGHT

Could a higher power be responsible for Australia's hammer-fisted **Vic Darchinyan** and Mexico's **Jorge Arce** arriving in the flyweight division at the same time? Darchinyan's victory over the more experienced **Irene Pacheco** for the IBF title was one of the division's bright spots in 2004, and Arce's kayo of Hussein Hussein was the sort of fight that will be talked about for months to come.

The rest of the class is not bad, either. WBC king **Pongsaklek Wonjongkam** made his 12th title defense this past January, defeating **Noriyuki Komatsu** in Tokyo. There is already talk of Arce meeting Wonjongkam, which would be great for fans of this division, even if it seems unfair that Arce gets a title shot so soon. As for WBA beltholder **Lorenzo Parra**, he looked to be the man to beat after whipping Morel in '03, but he has been uneven ever since. He won a narrow majority decision over **Takafumi Sakata**, decisioned the faded **Yo Sam Choi**, and was then nearly kayoed by **Trash Nakanuma** before barely retaining the title on points. At least Parra is fighting guys with reputations; WBO titlist **Omar Narvaez**, although unbeaten, seems content to beat softies in his native Argentina.

Youngbloods **Brian Viloria** and **Brahim Asloum** continue to progress. Viloria defeated two tough journeymen last year, **Gilberto Keb Baas** and Juan Alfonso **Keb Baas**, while

PHOTO BY KAZUHIRO NOGI/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Kawashima nails Raul Juarez with a right in defense of WBC belt

FLYWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Vic Darchinyan

Best Boxer
Lorenzo Parra

Most Protected
Disdado Gabi

Is He Still Around?
Alexander Mahmutov

Matchmaker's Dream
Jorge Arce-Vic Darchinyan

Deserves A Title Shot
Takafumi Sakata

Most Fun To Watch
Jorge Arce

On The Way Down
Randy Mangubat

Underrated
Jose Lopez

Overrated
Omar Narvaez

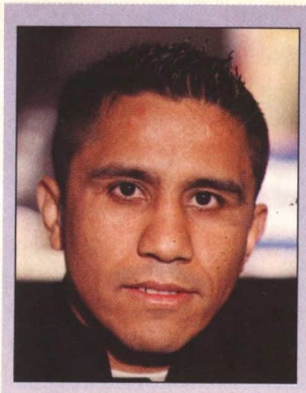
Best Fight in 2004
Vic Darchinyan KO 12
Irene Pacheco

Asloum, who has already collected a number of minor European belts, beat **Noel Arambulet** in his toughest test to date. And keep an eye on Puerto Rico's **Jose Lopez**. He's the flyweight version of Javier Jauregui, a journeyman who can bang. Meanwhile, 35-year-old **Rosendo Alvarez**, although still a name, is probably on his last legs, thanks in part to lack of activity.

Think About It: Wonjongkam put himself in the record books in 2002 by scoring the fastest knockout in flyweight title history. The occasion was a 34-second kayo of **Daisuke Naito**. But in 2004, Naito set a record himself, needing only 24 seconds to dispatch **Takeyuki Kojima**, the quickest knockout in Japanese-title history. Kojima isn't likely to continue the trend; he hasn't fought since being kayoed by Naito.

JR. FLYWEIGHT

The lights went out on the junior flyweights when **Rosendo Alvarez** and **Jorge Arce** jumped to 112. Not that 108 was ever going to be a glamour division, but without those two, it's simply a wasteland. IBF titleholder **Victor Burgos** leads the pack, but he fights infrequently. Just under Burgos are veterans **Beibis Mendoza** and **Nelson Dieppa**, both averaging one fight per year, although at press time Dieppa was scheduled to make his second appearance in 2005, defending the WBO strap against **Hugo Cazares**. New WBC boss **Eric Ortiz** is more active, but has never fought outside of Mexico. And **Pichit Siriwat**, since losing by knockout to Alvarez in 2002, has spent the past three years in Thailand fighting easy opponents.



Victor Burgos

Eric Ortiz

The bottom half of the top 10 includes **Ulisis Solis**, **Jose Aguirre**, and **Kermin Guardia**, who all have losses to the gentlemen in the top half, and **Shingo Yamaguchi**, who fights exclusively in Tokyo. **Roberto Vasquez**, the 21-year-old knockout artist from Panama, will have fought Mendoza for the long vacant WBA title by the time you read this. Maybe a young slugger like Vasquez can add some pop to this tired division. Another possibility is Brian Viloria, who fought at 112 pounds last year but has been mentioned as an opponent for WBC beltholder Ortiz.

Think About It: When last year's annual report was written, the junior fly group was the only division among the bottom six that featured a RING champ—Rosendo Alvarez. With Alvarez' departure, there are six vacancies between junior feather and strawweight. One of the problems THE RING faces when trying to name a champion in these smaller classes is that the top men

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Roberto Vasquez

Best Boxer
Nelson Dieppa

Most Protected
Freddie Beleno

Is He Still Around?
Luis "El Mosquito" Lazarte

Matchmaker's Dream
Victor Burgos-
Roberto Vasquez

Deserves A Title Shot
Shingo Yamaguchi

Most Fun To Watch
Eric Ortiz

On The Way Down
Melchor Cobb Castro

Underrated
Ulisis Solis

Overrated
Pitchit Siriwat

Best Fight In 2004
Rosendo Alverez W 12
Beibis Mendoza

WHAT'S IN, WHAT'S OUT

IN	OUT
Glencoffee	Kofi
B-Hop	W-Jop
Comebacks	Tuneups
Golden Boy Promotions	Sugar Ray Leonard Boxing
The Contender	The Next Great Champ
Clint Eastwood	Howard Eastman
Buddy McGirt	Bronco McKart
J.C. Chavez Jr.	Roy Jones Jr.
Jorge Arce	Jorge Paez
Tito	Panchito

aren't likely to fight each other, especially if they're from different countries. Moreover, American promoters won't pay to bring an Asian fighter to these shores, unless he's an opponent for a major star. Since smaller fighters can't demand big paydays, an alphabet belt is everything to them. Hence, they'll stay put and fight whomever their respective sanctioning body mandates. Although the popularity of Latin fighters may make it easier to crown a RING champion, we may still have six vacancies this time next year.

STRAWWEIGHT

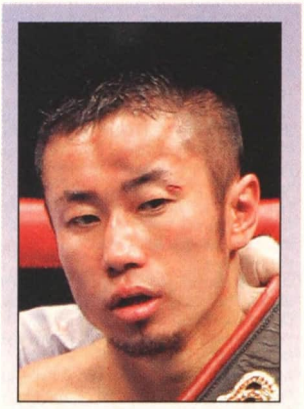
The epic reign of **Ricardo Lopez** looks even more impressive in retrospect. Nowadays, it's one defense and out in the strawweight class. All three alphabet straps changed hands during the past year-and-a-half, with veteran **Muhammad Rachman** beating **Daniel Reyes** for the WBC belt in September and **Yutaka Niida** regaining the WBA title from **Noel Arambulet** in October. **Isaac Bustos** stopped **Eagle Kyowa** for the IBF belt in December and lost it in April to **Katsunari Takayama**.

Niida's win was especially dramatic since he'd retired in 2001 and failed in his first bid to regain the title in '03. Niida has also shown himself to be a step above the rest by defending the title twice, first against hard-hitting **Juan Landaeta** and recently against **Jae Won Kim** of South Korea.

Slick WBO titlist **Ivan Calderon** has already made five defenses of the belt and was scheduled to meet journeyman **Noel Tunacao** in April. Tunacao hasn't fought since being stopped by Rachman in December of '03. On the way up is **Rodel Mayol** of the Philippines, who features 16 knockouts among his 20 wins. Mexico's **Omar Soto** defeated **Daniel Reyes** in February by decision. The win was supposed to earn him a shot at the IBF strap.

Rachman was last year's "Most Overrated" strawweight, and because he's done nothing to impress us since then, he retains his dubious spot in the division sidebar. He recently retained the belt via three-round technical-draw against 36-year-old **Fahlan Sakkreerin**, who was stopped by **Victor Burgos** last May. The class geezer is 39-year-old **Chana Porpaoin**, who is 2-1-2 in his last five fights.

Think About It: Since it's common for strawweights and junior flyweights to jump back and forth between weight classes, why not combine the two groups? That would give us one solid division instead of two weak ones. Also, a deeper pool of contenders would mean fewer fighters being recycled for title shots. It's not that we have something against Sakkreerin or Tunacao, but should fighters knocked out in their last fight receive title shots? The alphabet gangs, of course, would never allow the straws to vanish, because they'd lose so many sanctioning fees. In fact, we're more likely to get an additional division, perhaps a junior cruiserweight class, before we lose the strawweights. ■



Yutaka Niida

STRAWWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Rodel Mayol

Best Boxer
Ivan Calderon

Most Protected
Eriberto Gejon

Is He Still Around?
Nico Thomas

Matchmaker's Dream
Yutaka Niida-Rodel Mayol

Deserves A Title Shot
Omar Soto

Most Fun To Watch
Yutaka Niida

On The Way Down
Kermin Guardia

Underrated
Juan Landaeta

Overrated
Muhammad Rachman

Best Fight In 2004
Yutaka Niida W12
Juan Landaeta

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Calderon bangs Roberto Leyva's body

BACK ISSUES OF KO

Back issues of several editions of *KO Magazine,* the acknowledged leader in boxing journalism, are still available in limited quantity. Since its inception in 1980, *KO* has become known for its quality stories and columns and peak-action photographs. Don't delay. Supplies are running out!

June 1983: WBA Jr. Middleweight Champion Davey Moore: Bracing For Duran's Last Stand. Color Pinup: Donald Curry. Interview: Pinklon Thomas. Also: Duran-Cuevas, Hagler-Sibson.

Aug. 1983: Michael Spinks: King Of The Light Heavyweights ... But The Glory Can't Erase The Sadness. Color Pinup: Johnny Bumphus. Interview: Jones & Rappaport. Also: Jones-McCrory, Pryor-Arguello II preview, world's best fighter poll, Jeff Chandler, Mark Breland, Leon Spinks.

Oct. 1983: Is Larry Holmes Finished? Color Pinup: Greg Page. Interview: Marvis Frazier. Also: Marvin Hagler, Bobby Chacon, Jack Dempsey.

July 1984: Donald Curry: "I'm Better Under Pressure." Color Pinup: Gerrie Coetzee. Interview: Curry. Also: Pipino Cuevas, John Mugabi, Bill Costello, M. Spinks-Davis.

Aug. 1984: WBC Heavyweight Champion Terrible Tim Witherspoon: A Superstar Of Tomorrow? Color Pinup: Rocky Lockridge. Interview: Sugar Ray Leonard. Also: Marvin Hagler, Gomez-LaPorte.

Oct. 1984: Golden Boy Mark Breland: Can He Be The Next Sugar Ray? Color Pinup: Jaime Garza. Interview: Aaron Pryor. Also: Bramble-Mancini, Sugar Ray Leonard.

Nov. 1984: Thomas Hearns: "Hagler Is Shakin' Like A Leaf On A Tree!" Color Pinup: Tim Witherspoon. Interview: Livingstone Bramble. Also: Rosario-Davis, Marlon Starling.

Feb. 1985: Gerry Cooney: How Far Can He Go This Time? Color Pinup: Michael Spinks. Interview: Ray Mancini. Also: Dream fights, Hector Camacho.

March 1985: Next For Marvelous Marvin Hagler: The Only Fight That Really Matters. Color Pinup: Mike McCallum. Interview: Thomas Hearns. Also: Santos-Medal, Meza-Garza, Holmes-Bonecrusher.

May 1985: Thomas Hearns: *KO* Fighter Of The Year. Color Pinup: Gerry Cooney. Also: Camacho-Ramirez, Truth Williams, Year In Review.

July 1985: Aaron Pryor: Has Hawk Time Run Out? Color Pinup: Donald Curry. Interview: Greg Page. Also: Ray Mancini, James Shuler, Costello-Hatcher.

Aug. 1985: King Cobra: "Hagler-Hearns Is Done And I'm Better Than Both Of Them!" Color Pinup: John Mugabi. Interview: Bobby Czyz. Also: Larry Holmes, Roberto Duran, DeWitt-Lee.

Oct. 1985: Still Champ After All These Years: Larry Holmes—A Legend Continues To Grow. Interview: Mark Breland. Also: Michael Spinks, Milton McCrory, Wilfredo Gomez.

Nov. 1985: McGuigan! The Pluck Of The Irish. Also: Julio Cesar Chavez, Thomas-Weaver, Donald Curry, featherweights.

Dec. 1985: Pinklon Thomas: "Larry Holmes Betrayed Boxing." Color Pinup: Hagler-Mugabi. Also: Mike McCallum, Tyrell Biggs, Camacho-Ramirez.

Jan. 1986: Macho Mania! Hector Camacho Takes Aim At 10 Tough Targets. Color Pinup: Jimmy Paul. Interview: Alexis Arguello. Also: Truth Williams, Curry-McCrory.

Feb. 1986: King Michael: How Long Will He Rule The Heavyweights? Also: Barry McGuigan, Shawn O'Sullivan, Spinks-Holmes, *Rocky IV,* world's best fighter poll.

Oct. 1986: They're Back!!! The Cooney Circus Returns. Interview: Sugar Ray Leonard. Also: Jimmy Paul, Mike Tyson, Donald Curry.

Dec. 1986: Larry Holmes' Message To Mike Tyson: "Show Me You Can Kick My Butt!" Color pinup: Mark Breland. Interview: Holmes. Also: Witherspoon-Bruno, Evander Holyfield, Cruz-McGuigan, Danny Lopez.

Feb. 1987: Upset Of The Decade: Has Honeyghan Cut Short The Curry Era? Color Pinup: Marvin Johnson. Interview: Bobby Czyz. Also: Edwin Rosario, Hector Camacho.

June 1987: New WBA Welterweight Champion Mark Breland: He's Got A Lot To Smile About. Interview: Marvin Hagler. Color Pinup: Greg Haugen. Also: Michael Olajide, Carlos Monzon.

Oct. 1987: Greatness Beckons: When Will Mike Tyson Answer The Call? Color Pinup: Michael Olajide. Interview: Tyrell Biggs. Also: Paz-Haugen, Marvin Hagler.

Nov. 1987: Michael Spinks: The War With Tyson Is Okay With Him. Color Pinup: Vinny Pazienza. Interview: Frankie Duarte. Also: Matthew Hilton, Hagler-Czyz.

Dec. 1987: Mike Tyson: Undisputed Heavyweight King—But Is He Losing His Loyal Subjects? Color Pinup: Matthew Hilton. Interview: Barry McGuigan. Also: Aaron Pryor, Mike McCallum.

Jan. 1988: The Collapse Of A Hero: Why Breland Never Hit The Mark Of Greatness. Color Pinup: Michael Spinks. Interview: Aaron Pryor. Also: Michael Nunn, Alexis Arguello, lightweights.

Feb. 1988: Pazienza & Haugen Go For Each Other's Throats. Color Pinup: Marlon Starling. Interview: Bob Arum. Also: Tate-Olajide, ESPN Boxing.

July 1988: Superfight History Dictates: Don't Expect The Expected From Tyson-Spinks. Color Pinup: Roger Mayweather. Interview: Dr. Ferdie Pacheco. Also: Roberto Duran, Azumah Nelson, Barkley-Olajide.

Aug. 1988: Tyson-Spinks: *KO's* Fearless Forecast Of Superfight '88. Color Pinup: Buddy McGirt. Interview: Matthew Hilton. Also: Lockridge-Knight, Evander Holyfield, Lloyd Honeyghan.

Sept. 1988: Tyson-Spinks, The Aftermath—What If Tyson Wins; What If Spinks Wins? Color Pinup: Frank Tate. Interview: Marlon Starling. Also: Barry McGuigan, Simon Brown, risk-taking.

Oct. 1988: Middleweight Terrorism: Iran Bombs The Hit Man. Color Pinup: Don Lalonde. Interview: Frank Bruno. Also: Roger Mayweather, Marvin Hagler.

Dec. 1988: Sugar Ray's Comeback: Why? Color Pinup: Simon Brown. Interview: Kevin Rooney. Also: Michael Nunn, best fighter poll, welterweight wars.

Jan. 1989: The Troubled Times Of Mike Tyson. Color Pinup: Lloyd Honeyghan. Interview: Gil Clancy. Also: Meldrick Taylor, Jeff Fenech, Boxing's Champs.

Aug. 1989: Special 100th Issue. Color Pinup: Hagler vs. Hearns. Also: The *KO* Years, 50 most influential people, '80s ratings, best of *KO* Interview, year-by-year review, Sugar Ray Robinson.

Sept. 1989: "I Beat Up Tyson Before, I'll Do It Again," by Carl Williams. Color Pinup: Michael Nunn. Also: Chavez-Mayweather, Brian Mitchell, Marv Albert.

Feb. 1990: George Foreman Risks A Multimillion-Dollar Shot At Tyson. Color Pinup: Brian Mitchell. Interview: Riddick Bowe. Also: Simon Brown, Molina-Lopez, East vs. West.

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HOPKINS VS. JONES II

Their Ultimate Showdown Will Be For Their Place In History

PHOTO BY MICHAEL W. HEAYN

PHOTO BY KEVIN KNIGHT/HBO

By Tim Graham

The matchup was a virtual afterthought. A vacant middleweight title was at stake, but the bout was on the undercard of a guaranteed Riddick Bowe victory over Jesse Ferguson. The card wasn't a pay-per-view event, and it drew a live crowd of about 8,500.

That's the way it was a dozen years ago when Roy Jones and Bernard Hopkins clashed for the IBF belt. Two of the greatest fighters of their generation—of any generation—met in relative obscurity, overshadowed by a heavyweight massacre.

It was the first major title bout for either man, and although Jones had become a sympathetic national figure for getting jobbed at the 1988 Olympics and Hopkins was appreciated by hardcore boxing fans, there was practically no mainstream news coverage of the match outside the Northeast U.S.

Imagine how big a Hopkins-Jones rematch would be today. Or better yet, a couple years back, when both fighters possessed an air of invincibility.

Their paths crossed that night, but never again. Their careers diverged. Jones went his way, unable to maintain 160 pounds.

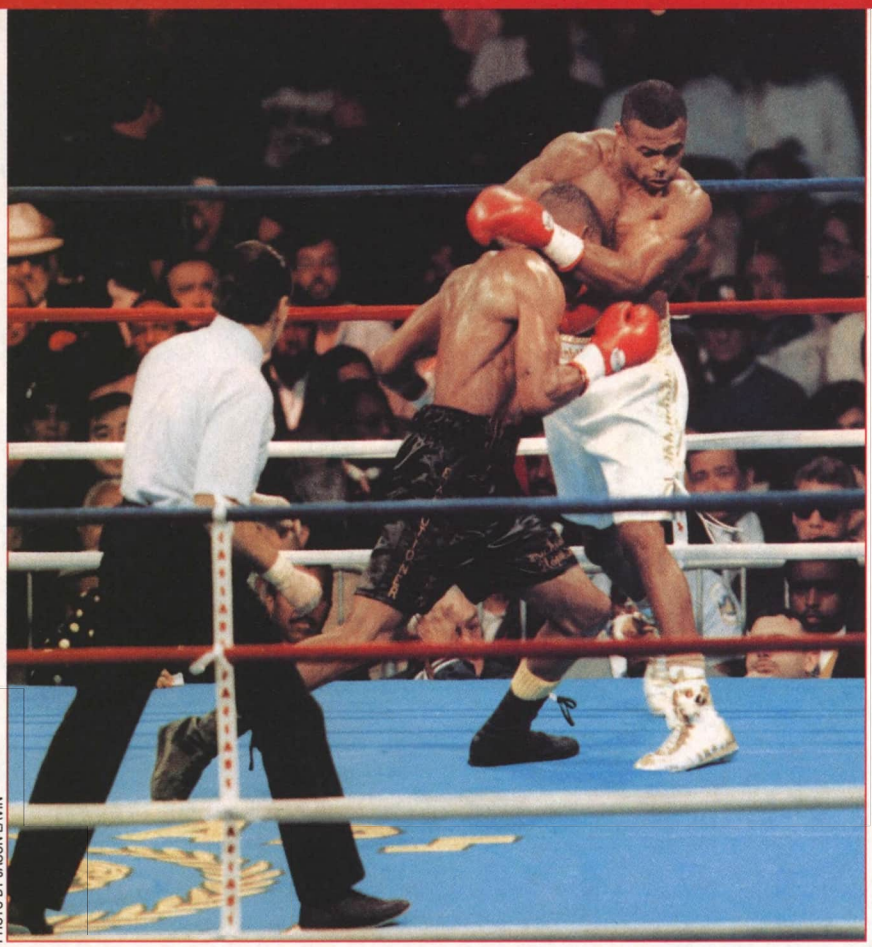


PHOTO BY JASON LAVIN

When Jones and Hopkins met for the vacant IBF middleweight title in 1993, Jones won a 12-round decision in a boring fight in which neither man looked like the future Hall of Famers they are today.

Hopkins remained a middleweight, where he fights to this day, a champion at the age of 40.

And even though both have been constants atop every pound-for-pound list and have dominated their respective weight classes over the past decade, their legacies will be vastly different. Jones had to be seen to be appreciated, while Hopkins looks far more impressive on paper than he does in the ring.

Jones, 49-3 (38), will always be recalled as a wildly talented athlete who thrilled fans as much as he aggravated them. He easily won titles in four divisions, yet he refused to test his considerable skills to their fullest and was eventually knocked cold in his last two bouts—not exactly the lasting image a ring legend wants to put forth.

Hopkins, 46-2-1 (32) with 1 no-contest, isn't done yet, but his place in history already has been carved out by longevity. He's not the most gorgeous performer, but he owns the middleweight record for consecutive world title defenses. He has been the undisputed champ for 3½ years. He hasn't lost since he met Jones, a stretch of 26 fights.

"Both guys are great," said Glen Johnson, one of the few men to have faced them both. Johnson won the IBF light heavyweight belt by starching Jones last September, but was stopped by Hopkins in 11 rounds eight years ago. "It comes down to which style you like best. That will determine their legacies. Their fans will decide it."

There are few objective comparisons between Jones and Hopkins. Analysts can look at their fight against each other, of course, but their three common opponents aren't very revealing. Johnson was the only one who was talented and around his prime when he fought both. The others were Percy Harris (Hopkins, in his seventh pro fight, decisioned him nearly 2½ years before Jones knocked him out in four rounds), and career loser David McCluskey (Jones, in his fifth pro fight, stopped him inside three rounds two years before Hopkins stopped him in five).

Another way to compare legacies is by how well they fared against Hall of Famers, whether already enshrined or on the way. Jones decisioned a young Hopkins, a prime James Toney, and an old Mike McCallum. Hopkins lost to Jones but destroyed a prime Felix Trinidad and a faded Oscar De La Hoya.

When Jones and Hopkins squared off at RFK Stadium in Washington, D.C., fans booed the show. Hopkins, a 5-to-1 underdog, pressed the action, but Jones won by being his typical self, controlling the fight with cautious-yet-sublime athleticism.

The action wasn't scintillating, but the end result was significant. Jones won his first major professional championship. It was a special story after what happened to him in Seoul, where he should have received the gold medal but didn't. He had clearly defeated native son Park Si-Hun, but the judges saw it differently. Born of jingoism, Jones' tale was a compelling one, and fans flocked to support him.

He defended the middleweight title once (against Thomas Tate) and then moved up to face Toney for the IBF super middleweight belt in 1994. Toney also was an undefeated rising star, but he was more established. Jones dominated him and became the toast of the boxing world.

Two years later, the pride of Pensacola, Florida, easily decisioned McCallum for the WBC light heavyweight belt, and the 175-pound class is where Jones became comfortable. Some might say a little too comfortable.

Jones' allure faded throughout the late-1990s. While his greatness was unquestioned, his motives seemed dubious. He was terrified that the nightmare that befell friend Gerald McClellan in 1995—a brutal slugfest against Nigel Benn left McClellan severely brain damaged—would happen to him.

Jones became cautious to a fault. His list of homogeneous opponents became a boring blur. In succession from 1999-'02 he faced Rick Frazier, Reggie Johnson, David Telesco, Richard Hall, Eric Harding, Derrick Harmon, Julio Gonzalez, Glen Kelly, and Clinton Woods.

Jones was saddled with the nickname "Reluctant Roy." Fans staged a "Roy-

cott" of his pay-per-views because they grew tired of the way he strong-armed HBO into accepting his middling foes while dodging Dariusz Michalczewski and refusing to grant rematches to Hopkins or Toney. Jones also backed out of a proposed fight against Buster Douglas, a match many predicted would be a lopsided victory for Jones.

Once Jones was placed on a pedestal, he rarely provided a legitimate opportunity for anyone to knock him off.

"Jones had this extraordinary talent, but he seemed too calculated and cautious in most of his fights," said HBO boxing analyst Larry Merchant. "He was crowd-pleasing in a way that was like watching a solo artist. It was almost, in a way, kind of bloodless. You were awed by his talent, but his fights were so often one-sided that they were concerts rather than dramas."

Jones reversed much of the criticism against him in 2003, when he finally followed through with his longtime heavyweight tease. He toyed with WBA heavyweight titlist John Ruiz and cruised to a unanimous decision victory.

"Had he stopped his career after beating Ruiz," Merchant said, "it would be hard to argue against anybody who wanted to raise him to Mt. Olympus."

But Jones didn't stop there. He fought three more times, barely beating Antonio Tarver before getting laid out with one punch in the rematch and again versus Johnson.

The way Jones, now 36, met his demise in back-to-back bouts was a devastating turn of events for the proud tactician, and it might taint his career forever. That said, he could resume his career after a hiatus, a la Kostya Tszyu and Trinidad.

"If you put 10 people in a room and bring up the subject of Roy Jones, you'll get 10 different opinions," Johnson said. "But one thing you'll always come back to is he did a tremendous job. How he came to a full stop so suddenly, some people will say he finally ran into two guys who had his number. Some will say he already lost it along the way. Some will say it happened when he went up to heavyweight and then came back down too fast."

The times have changed. For instance, many don't count the way Muhammad Ali went out against Larry Holmes and Trevor Berbick when examining The Greatest and what he meant to boxing. But that was a different time, and because Jones hadn't fought all comers in the past, he had yet to cement his status as somebody who beat all comers in his prime.

"We're in an era where a guy who is 35 is not necessarily considered to be way past his prime," Merchant said. "It probably damaged him more than, say, Joe

PHOTO BY ELIOT SCHECHTER/GETTY IMAGES

Even when he ruled the light heavyweight division, Jones spent too many of his prime years defending against no-hopers such as Glen Kelly, who was kayoed in the seventh round. These sort of victories did very little to enhance his legacy or win the hearts of old-school fans.

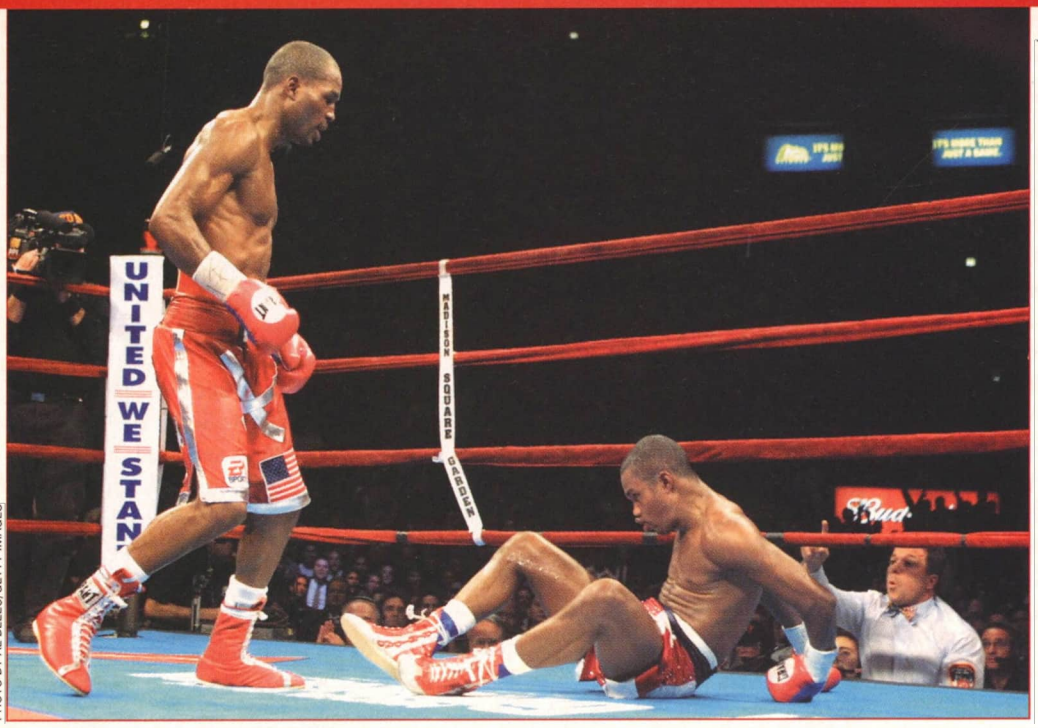


PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Hopkins' 12th-round TKO of previously undefeated Felix Trinidad in September 2001 at Madison Square Garden remains the most impressive victory of his career. It was the fight that convinced "The Executioner's" skeptics of his greatness.

160-pound division automatically place him among the all-time greats, to be mentioned in the same breath as Robinson, Harry Greb, and Marvin Hagler. Perhaps even more prestigious, he belongs in any discussion about the best fighters of any weight class to come from Philadelphia.

"The Executioner" looks as strong today as he did five years ago. He is 19-1-1 with 1 no-contest in title fights and long ago shattered Carlos Monzon's record for consecutive defenses.

And Hopkins hasn't extended the record with a string of easy touches. He handed Trinidad and Johnson their first losses, made De La Hoya writhe. He also beat Antwun Echols twice, Robert Allen twice, then-WBC titlist Keith Holmes, William Joppy, and Howard Eastman.

Louis getting knocked out at the end of this career or Sugar Ray Robinson losing most of his fights when he was way past his prime. That's because there wasn't a body of opinion that Jones' extraordinary talent measured up against all the best fighters ever in his weight class. And I think those two knockouts changed a lot of the perception of him.

"I don't think it destroyed his accomplishments, that for more than a decade he was a dazzling performer. That's unassailable. But in terms of younger boxing observers who wanted to believe that somebody of their time was as good or better than anybody of any time ... I think that changed. His aura of invincibility was smashed."

The same can't be said about Hopkins. On the verge of entering his fifth decade, he's still going strong. He beat all the best of his generation, and now he's going after the next wave. He is scheduled to fight 26-year-old potential star Jermain Taylor in July.

Hopkins' accomplishments in the

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Had Jones retired after his 12-round decision over John Ruiz to capture the WBA heavyweight title (pictured), his legacy would have been assured. But as things turned out, it proved to be his final great performance, and was followed by a controversial decision win and two knockout losses in the light heavyweight division.

PHOTO BY NICK LAHAM/GETTY IMAGES

While Hopkins has set a new record for middleweight title defenses and has gone undefeated since 1993, not all of his bouts have been fan-friendly, including his most recent outing, a 12-round unanimous decision over England's Howard Eastman (pictured).

"You probably won't knock out Bernard Hopkins the way Roy Jones got knocked out," Johnson said. "Bernard's defense is a lot better than Roy Jones' defense."

Hopkins also made an impact out of the ring. While Jones cashed many a fat paycheck for fighting overmatched opponents, the self-managed Hopkins meandered his own way through the boxing world, feuding with promoters and challenging the industry status quo.

He made one of the sport's shrewdest boxing decisions when he knocked out De La Hoya and then signed an incredibly lucrative contract with Golden Boy Promotions. Hopkins got rich through guile, while Jones got rich fleecing HBO.

"Hopkins will be remembered as one of the best middleweights, but beyond that as a guy who battled the establishment and the politics of boxing in his own way," Merchant said. "He made his mark with the single-mindedness that overwhelmed all the opposition both in and out of the ring."

When pressed on who the better fighter was, both Johnson and Merchant seem to appreciate Jones more.

PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

Will this be the lasting memory of Jones, a knockout victim in his two final bouts? Unlike Hopkins, Jones isn't currently active, but he could, of course, make a comeback that would impact on his legacy one way or another.

"Bernard Hopkins accomplished a lot, but when you look at pure talent you have to go with Roy Jones," Johnson said. "He just has a little more something. I can't say what it is, but there's a little more excitement."

Merchant claimed Jones had the ability to draw the casual sports fan's attention, while Hopkins never really transcended boxing.

"At the end of the day, they're going to look back, and Jones beat Hopkins and Toney, who was a hot young fighter, and he beat Ruiz," Merchant said. "Those are pretty impressive things.

"You can look back and say Hopkins was a great middleweight, but Jones was a great fighter."

But there's one more important factor to consider.

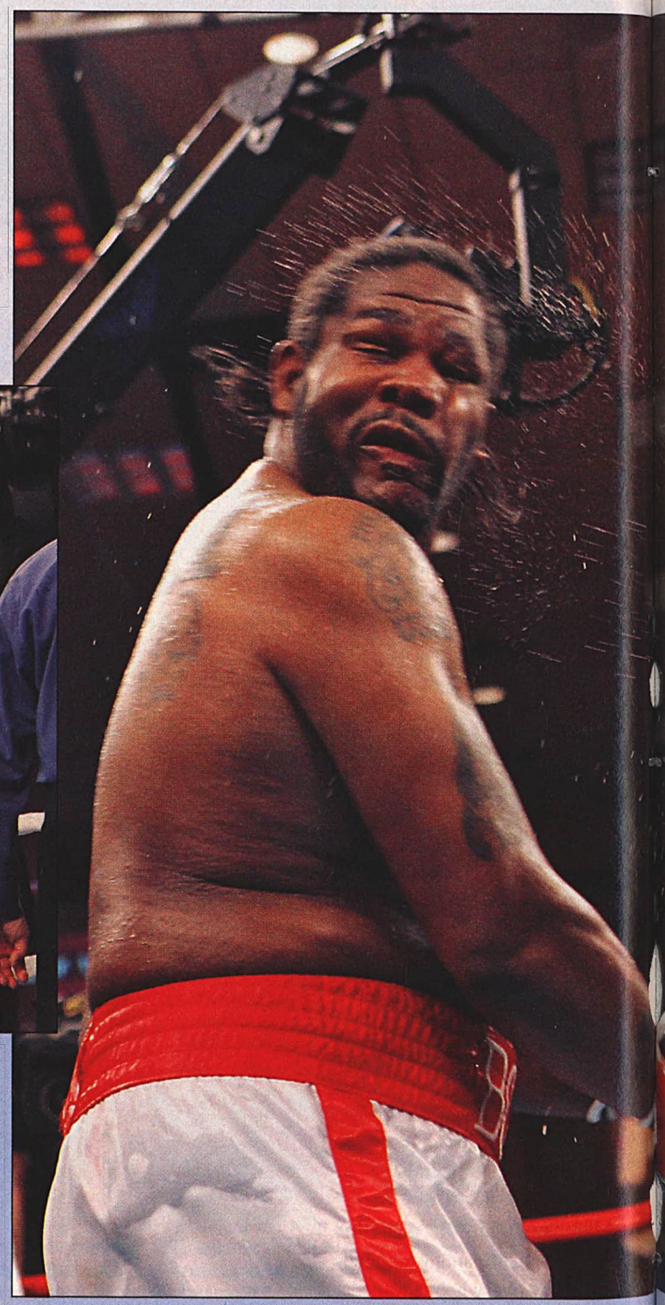
Yes, Jones was a great fighter.

Hopkins still is. ■

Tim Graham is a sports writer for the Buffalo (New York) News and an occasional contributor to this magazine.

A DISASTER WAITING TO HAPPEN?

Should Boxing Protect Riddick Bowe From Himself?



Bowe's comeback was almost derailed in his second bout when journeyman Billy Zumbrun gave him all he could handle. While Bowe squeaked by on a controversial and unpopular decision, the former heavyweight champion took a lot of punishment, which raised additional concerns about his health.

By Robert Cassidy

PHOTOS BY JAN SANDERS

There are few happy endings in boxing. It seemed clear due to the course of events over the last several years that the latest chapter in the life of former heavyweight champion Riddick Bowe was to be a sad one. Now, after an 18-month incarceration, Bowe is attempting to rewrite the finish of his boxing career.

At the age of 37, Bowe is two fights into a comeback that is, at best, poorly planned and, at worst, dangerous to his health.

On April 7, Bowe labored to a controversial 10-round split decision over mediocre Billy Zumbrun at the Pechanga Resort & Casino, in California. Bowe weighed 280 pounds for the fight, which was televised by Fox on *The Best Damn Sports Show Period*. His appearance at such an outlandish weight suggests that Bowe is having difficulty finding the motivation to train.

"I really shouldn't have put him in the ring that night," said Dan Goossen, who promoted the bout. "He wasn't in the type of condition that he should have been to put himself out there on television."

Far more troubling, though, are the recently published court

At 280 pounds, Bowe was far from the body beautiful, as is clearly illustrated by the photograph from the weigh-in. Bowe's promoter, Dan Goossen, who blames himself for allowing the out-of-shape ex-champ to fight, says he wants to see two months of diligent gym work from Bowe.

documents from Bowe's 1998 kidnapping trial. At that time, Bowe's defense team argued the fighter suffered from Frontal Lobe Syndrome from his boxing career and that it impaired his judgment and decision-making process. While Bowe contends the argument was merely his defense strategy to avoid jail time, the medical testimony could come back to haunt him as his comeback progresses.

In a sense, it already has. Last October, Bowe was denied a boxing license in the state of Tennessee because of concerns over that testimony. The Department of Commerce and Insurance, which oversees boxing in that state, believes that Bowe suffered some form of brain damage during his career. That information—as well as the ample give-and-take Bowe has endured during his career—was not lost upon the officials in California when Bowe applied for a license to fight Zumbrun.

"My initial reaction to the fight was fear and reservation," said Dean Lohuis, the acting executive officer of the California State Athletic Commission.

In addition to the standard licensing procedures in California, Lohuis consulted with commission physician Dr. Paul Wallace, who put Bowe through additional and more stringent neurological testing. It included an MRI and Immediate Post Concussion Assessment and Cognitive Test. Upon passing those tests, Bowe was licensed to fight Zumbrun.

Last September, Bowe, 42-1 (33), with 1 no-contest, kicked off his comeback with a second-round knockout of perennial opponent Marcus Rhode in Oklahoma. But Zumbrun, who entered the fight with a 17-5-1(9) record, would prove far more difficult.

The former heavyweight champion displayed a sharp left jab at times and managed to drop Zumbrun with a left hook to the body in round four. But Bowe's conditioning was awful, a familiar problem even during his prime. Bowe claimed to have trained just three weeks for the Zumbrun fight and sparred for just one week. Bowe won the undisputed heavyweight title from Evander Holyfield in 1992 while weighing 235 pounds, but he only hit that weight once more in his 12 subsequent fights.

After the Zumbrun fight, Bowe claimed he didn't want to lose too much weight, thinking that it would diminish his power and strength.

"I wasn't pleased with myself," said Goossen of Bowe's condition. "It was no fault of his own, it was my fault. I didn't realize he wasn't in top shape when he came to California. I should have pushed the fight back at least a month or two months."

In his prime, Bowe was a lethal offensive fighter, but the hand speed that allowed him to reach the pinnacle of the heavyweight division was absent. He also had some awkward and clumsy moments that allowed Zumbrun to escape further damage. Even more troubling was that Zumbrun shook Bowe in the fifth and seventh rounds, snapping his head back on several occasions with flush punches.

THE RING made several attempts to speak with Bowe after the fight, through promoter Dan Goossen and Bowe's spokesperson, Tommy Smalls. Bowe, however, did not return calls.

"Any determination you make from this fight, I think, is unfair from whatever side you fall into," said Goossen. "Whether you felt it was good for him to go 10 rounds and that he won the fight under conditions that were far from being perfect. Or, if you felt he wouldn't have the chance or the ability to get back to where he was."

Lohuis offered a mixed review: "I was impressed that a man of his age and his weight kept up with the pace of the fight,"

he said. "The jab basically won him the fight. He still has a world-class jab."

Then Lohuis added, "His reflexes were average. I think he should have seen some of those punches coming. He looked too hittable, and that's worrisome."

It is indeed worrisome when you consider the trilogy of thrilling fights Bowe had with Evander Holyfield and the beatings he took from Andrew Golota at the close of his first career. Even then, Bowe's speech appeared to thicken, a traditional layman's sign that a fighter is taking too many punches.

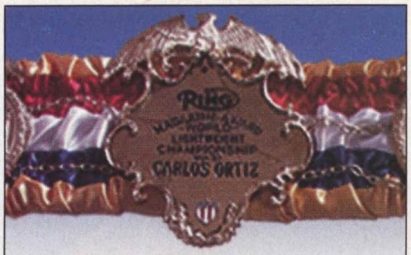
Still, Lohuis said that Bowe's speech pattern was not a factor in his decision to grant him a boxing license.

"I don't have any comparisons of his speech before or after. I didn't do any comparisons," said Lohuis. "Those are observations and judgments and opinions. I'm not saying that opinions aren't good, because they give you a starting point. We used medical evaluation and that's the right way to analyze it. We went over and beyond our criteria for licensing a fighter. The tests were very substantial."

It is difficult to assess Bowe's motivation for the comeback. Goossen insists it is not financial and that Bowe firmly believes he can regain the heavyweight title. In a prefight press release issued by Goossen-Tutor promotions, Bowe said, "I'm physically and mentally strong, extremely hungry and very, very motivated … In watching these heavyweights of today, not only am I more powerful and a better boxer, but the little that I have lost from my championship years is more than any of them possess today."

The gold standard in boxing comebacks is George Foreman, who, after a 10-year hiatus, regained the heavyweight title at the age of 45. Numerous aging fighters have used the Foreman blueprint as inspiration to return to the ring. From a physi-

Bowe's best moment came in the fourth round when he floored Zumbrun with a left hook to the body. But Bowe couldn't finish the job, and Zumbrun continued to fight effectively after beating referee Pat Russell's count. It was the only knockdown of the bout.



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The one thing that Bowe seems to have retained from his earlier career is his world-class jab. In several rounds he connected almost at will with his straight left, which probably kept "Big Daddy" from falling too far behind on the official scorecards.

cal standpoint, Foreman was extraordinary. The fact that he shows no ill effects from either of his tours in the heavyweight division is remarkable. He is not, however, the norm.

"George Foreman was one-in-a-million," said Dr. Margaret Goodman, of the Nevada State Athletic Commission. "On the other side, look at how rare it was to have a 26-year-old fighter such as Mr. Bowe suffer such neurological changes, including the changes in his speech at such a young age."

"There will never be another George Foreman," said Lohuis. "He was an amazing specimen. But let's not forget one thing about the Michael Moorer fight: Foreman was an old man getting beat up until he landed that right hand."

In addition to the physical attributes Foreman was blessed with, he also transformed himself from a brooding puncher to a charming, grandfatherly personality that endeared him to the public. While Bowe has always been affable, he doesn't possess the same charisma.

The change in Foreman's style was also less drastic. "George Foreman was always a plodding fighter," said Goossen, "so it was a lot easier to accept when you saw it in his comeback. But Riddick was never that kind of fighter. I think my brother Joe said it best when he said that Riddick has to re-invent his style."

But the way he approaches an opponent inside the ring and his charisma out of it could be the least of Bowe's problems. During his kidnapping trial, Bowe entered into a plea bargain with federal prosecutors, and when his legal team sought to reduce the amount of jail time agreed upon in the plea, they didn't just claim he suffered from Frontal Lope Syndrome, they submitted evidence from physicians.

"Frontal Lobe Syndrome refers to a group of neurologic abnormalities manifested as a result of damage to the frontal lobes of the brain," said Dr. Goodman. "Symptoms can include, loss of inhibition, increased talkativeness, tendency to joke about everything, lack of tact, loss of initiative. There can be problems with speech, such as a thick, difficult to understand speech."

While Bowe has dismissed the findings as legal maneuvering, the specter of brain damage looms over his comeback. It is conceivable that as long as Bowe passes the required tests, he could continue to get licensed. The various state athletic commissions wield a certain degree of power, but they could subject themselves to lawsuits should they deny a boxer who passes the medical requirements the right to fight. It is a delicate situation when a commission is assigned the task of protecting a fighter when he is no longer willing to protect himself, all the while worrying about violating his civil rights.

The New York State Athletic Commission made a bold move last November when it suspended Evander Holyfield indefinitely after his loss to Larry Donald. The suspension was based on performance, not medical evidence. Based on Bowe's performance against Zumbrun, Lohuis felt Bowe could fight again.

Said Lohuis, "Was there anything in my judgment that showed me that he shouldn't be fighting? Absolutely not."

Goossen tried this analogy: "There is

Zumbrun made good use of his right hand throughout most of the fight, clocking Bowe with numerous flush shots. Fortunately for Bowe, Zumbrun is not a big puncher, and although he was wobbled several times, Bowe never hit the floor.

all this coverage that Evander Holyfield should retire. The reason we say it is because he's lost it from the standpoint that he performed at the highest echelon of his division. But take the top 100 heavyweights in the world and then just examine the bottom 75. No one is screaming for their retirement due to lack of ability. It's somewhat unfair to judge a fighter who passes all his required physicals, and out of the bottom 75 heavyweights, he probably beats all of them. If you have to retire an Evander Holyfield because of what is said to be wear and tear on his body, then what about the other fighters that he can beat?"

It is an interesting argument, but the difference in Bowe's comeback is that there has already been documentation of brain injury. While Goodman pointed out that she has not examined Bowe recently, and could not comment directly on his condition, she would caution all fighters who consider a comeback after having sustained a brain injury.

"Any fighter who has suffered damage to their brain as result of boxing will increase their risk greatly of more damage by continuing to take further head blows in the gym or in a fight," she said. "I think fighters that could have suffered brain damage should undergo much stiffer requirements before considering licensure. Any fighter with documentation of brain damage should not be allowed to compete or spar. Damage to the brain can improve, but it will not completely resolve. Conditioning or losing weight will not make it better. Staying away from taking punishment to the head can help. How much? That depends on the individual."

Goossen insists that Bowe's safety is his main priority and that he is taking a wait-and-see approach when it comes to his next fight.

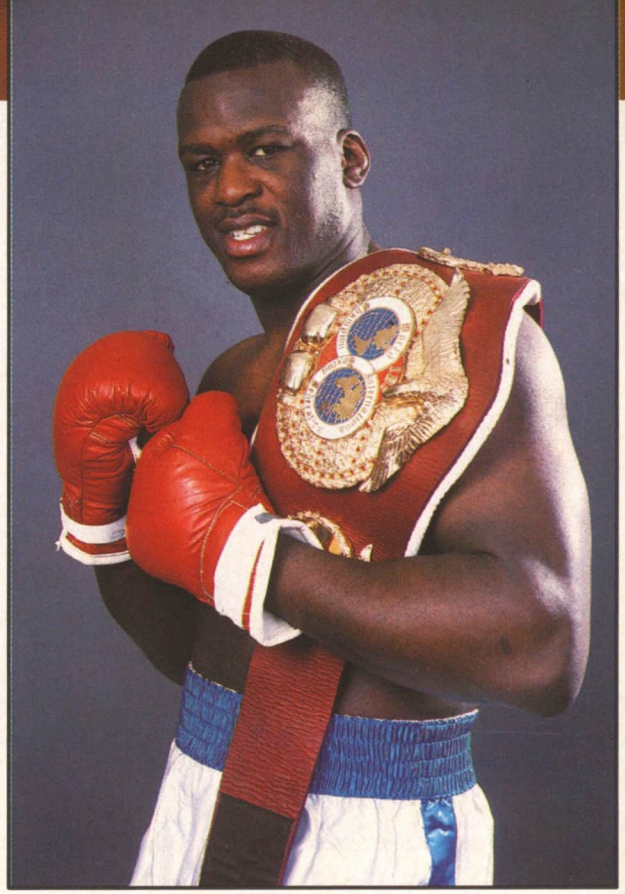
"If a fight dropped in my lap next week where Riddick could make a lot of money, I don't think I would take it," Goossen said. "I'd like to see Riddick in the gym for two months straight, with intense training. I'd like to see where his reflexes are, his speed. Then I would have a much easier time moving forward. I'm not here just to put him out there again. I think in looking out for the best interest of the fighter, you need to see dedication. Some of it would be from the standpoint of getting another real look at Riddick in the gym, rather than evaluating him in another fight. It had me squirming in my chair to watch Riddick get hit and not be able to do the things I remember this great champion doing for so many years. I think a lot of that had to do with his lack of being in shape. I think two months in the gym will give us a measuring stick."

The comeback will continue and the outcome remains uncertain. Each time Bowe steps back into the ring, those who are paid to protect a fighter when he is unable or unwilling to protect himself will be as integral to the story as the fighter. The ending—happy, sad, or tragic—awaits. ■

Robert Cassidy is a former associate editor of this magazine and a regular contributor.

Zumbrun and the majority of the fans at the Pechanga Resort & Casino felt that he'd done enough to win the fight, and when the 10-round decision went to Bowe, the ballroom crowd erupted in boos and chants of "bulls___."

The RING Update



Then and now: Douglas as he appeared in 1990 (right), shortly after returning from Tokyo, Japan, where he upset Mike Tyson to win the heavyweight title, and today (opposite page) in his hometown of Columbus, Ohio, where he has finally found peace of mind and gotten his life back on track.

Former Heavyweight Champion

BUSTER DOUGLAS

"I Didn't Care About A Thing ... But I Feel Good Now"

By Brian Doogan

Independence Day 1994. James "Buster" Douglas lay in bed, overcome by a joyless lethargy that gripped him, body and soul. Twice as heavy as his best fighting weight of 230 pounds, he had metamorphosed into a gargantuan recluse racked with self-pity, unrecognizable from the man who pulled off one of the enduring shocks in sport. Slowly, he summoned the energy to rise and pull on his socks, but something was wrong. His sugar level was approaching 900. A reading of 80 to 120 would have been normal.

When he became the first man to beat Mike Tyson, in February 1990, demythologizing the most feared heavyweight boxer since Sonny Liston, Douglas had the world at his feet. His next job paid $24-million and he was poised to seal a deal worth $100-million more. Then, pitifully, he fell at the feet of Evander Holyfield before his life spiraled so out of control that his friend John Russell caught him on the floor of his summer residence in Florida, staring into space, drinking beer and eating a bag of doughnuts. He was oblivious then to the signs pointing to the Grant Medical Center in his hometown of Columbus, Ohio, where just months later, he was driven by his wife, Bertha, slumped in a diabetic coma.

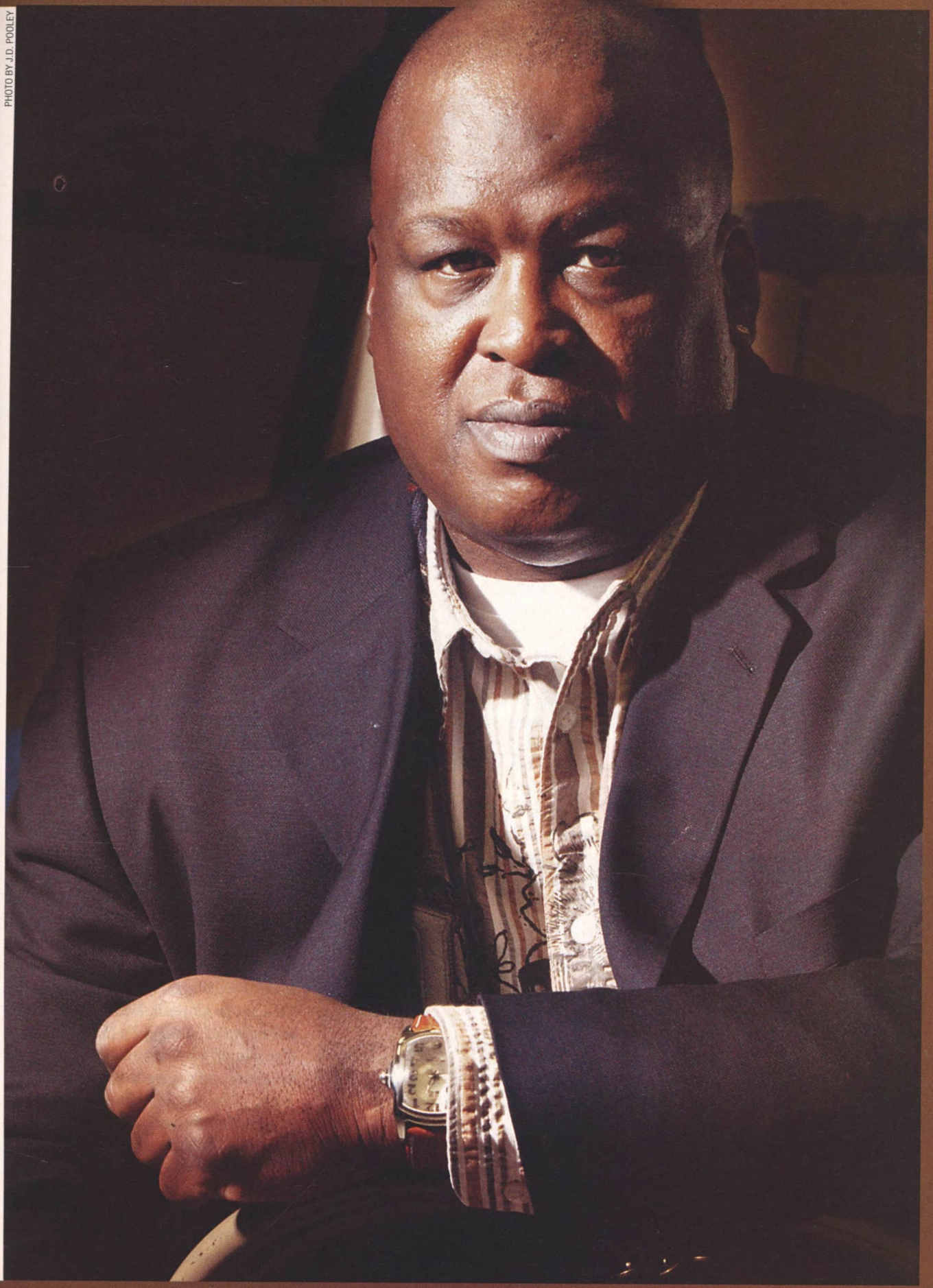


PHOTO BY J.D. POOLEY

PHOTO BY J.P. POOLEY

Douglas stands on the property he owns in Columbus, where he is a major player in a $65-million city-sponsored regeneration program. The idea is to revitalize the blighted eastside neighborhood where he grew up, and Douglas and his sons are taking an active role.

In the hospital, a beat away from death ("I'm at the gates, man, the demons ready to take me"), he experienced a hallucination in which a nurse and an orderly were strapping him on a stretcher and taking him by ambulance to the edge of an evil, haunted mountain. He tried to break loose and popped the strap around his left leg, but he could not escape. Before him stretched a dark, eerie road that made the man who tamed Tyson shake with fear. Suddenly he heard a voice, strong and reassuring, maybe the only voice that could rescue him.

"Kiss me again," Bill Douglas told his son. "Look at me. You're in a fight."

Buster had not fought in four years. But his legs and arms began to move, and almost as if he were in Tokyo again, stretched on the canvas from Tyson's savage right uppercut to the jaw, at a crossroads in life, he battled back.

***

Winter 2005. A white blanket of snow lay across the 3.66-acre site, a square city block on Columbus' eastside, recently a shrine to depravity and neglect, and now a vivid symbol of revitalization. Douglas stepped out of his Ford Dooley 4x4 and breathed in the air as he walked across the snow, feeling reborn. Proudly, he walked to the center of the site and explained the history before revealing his vision.

"I bought this property off the Catholic diocese in 1992 for $200,000," he said. "Originally, they had a seminary here and an orphanage, but they relocated and this became a roller skating rink. That's what was here when I was a kid and my plan was to open it up again. I liked to roller skate."

Across the street, he pointed out the Blackburn Recreation Center where his father, a fighter so devastating they called him "Dynamite," taught him to box. Back along Main Street, toward downtown, he identified the spot where he used to pull up in his mom's blue two-door Chevy Apollo to take her home from work: "She was a cook in a kitchen, a great cook, and I miss her," he said. "I have a lot of memories of here.

"Over the years I've put in $2.25-million, knocking down the rink, a couple of gas stations, some office space. It had all been abandoned, maybe 20 years or more, and the whole area was run down, full of poverty, crack heads, prostitution. Let's say, within six blocks of here, you wouldn't want to get stopped at a traffic light. It was crazy, man.

"But I knew I had something. At the time the infrastructure wasn't right for development and there was no investment forthcoming, but I guess I was patient. Now they have a $65-million regeneration program started in the city of Columbus and we're a major player. We're going to have condominiums, office and retail outlets right here, and this whole area on the eastside of town will be transformed."

Just as his own life has been since the day he drew back from that dark mountain road, beckoned by his dad. In June 1996, Douglas returned to the ring, weighing 244 pounds, and overwhelmed a Chicago clubfighter called Tony LaRosa

"It made me feel good to be back in the thick of things, to get on that saddle again and ride," Douglas recalled. He boxed eight more bouts, won seven, and finally hung up his gloves in 1999 with an overall pro record of 38-6-1 (25). "Ever since then I've poured my heart and soul into this," he added, surveying his real estate, his future. "My sons, B.J. and Artie, come out here and we take care of it ourselves, cut the grass, make sure everything's right. We'll start building soon and I keep saying to them that one day they'll be able to tell their kids they remember being out here when it was nothing. And they'll appreciate what they have."

The sole construction so far is a small memorial in one corner, a statue of Jesus kneeling at a table, dedicated to the father and mother who shaped him and two brothers, both shot dead. People who sit down on one of the three surrounding benches are sometimes surprised to see a man already there, deep in thought, remembering who he is and where he came from, faintly resembling a fighter who briefly, *reluctantly*, ruled the world. For years he hid himself in the Florida Keys on a boat he called Lula Pearl, drinking heavily and grieving for lost lives, his family's and his own: "I went out there and got lost, didn't care about a thing, didn't care for the way my boxing career went after Tokyo. But in the end, I guess I just didn't want to go out like that."

It took time, but Douglas was able to reconcile himself with his rise and fall, find his feet again, discover inner peace by looking long and hard into his past.

***

Lula Pearl decided to look into her boy's eyes to see the truth for herself. She needed to know if he had the toughness, as he said he did, to match Mike Tyson, who gloried in his sinister sobriquet, "baddest man on the planet."

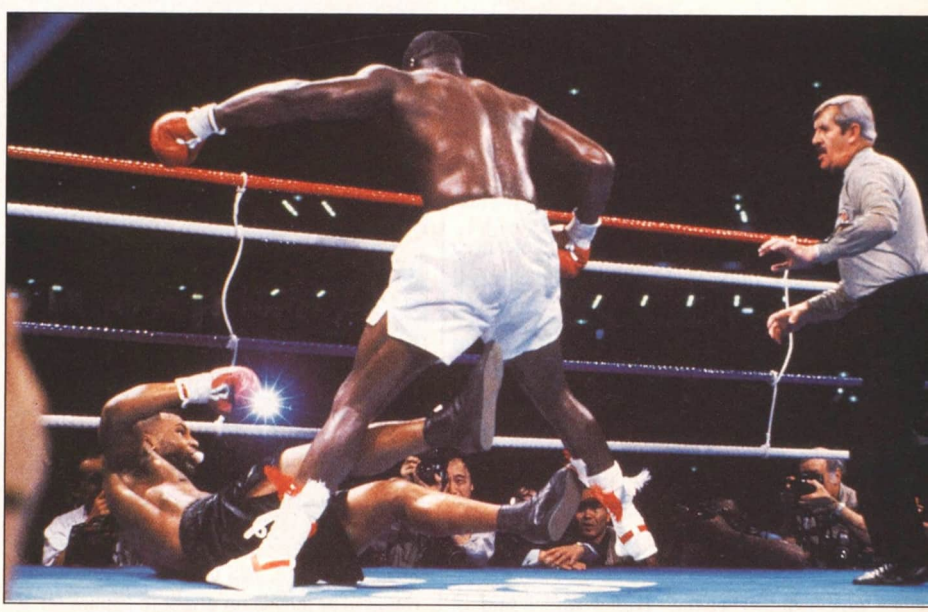
Her friends warned of dire consequences: "Oh my God, Lula, that boy of yours wants saving from this monster. You gotta do it, you gotta save that boy or he will be destroyed." She heard Angelo Dundee, the trainer of the greatest heavyweight ever, Muhammad Ali (whom young Buster used to try to emulate by biting his bottom lip as he fired pretty combination punches at his bathroom mirror), describe Tyson darkly: "This guy throws punches like they've come out of an assassin's gun." Only four of his victims in 37 fights had heard the sound of the final bell. Lula knew all of this. She was married to a fighter, a man they said was brutal in the ring, a killer. She was hardened to the business. But, as she got in her car, a quiet dread took hold.

She remembered how Buster, the oldest of her four boys, would disappear when he was young and she and his father argued. She knew that even now he would turn up his stereo or walk right out of a room rather than face a quarrel. How could he possibly face Tyson? Sure, he was Bill Douglas' son and she often saw the killer in the old man. But James was different, a boy who would curl up on the floor and fall asleep with his dogs, a boy her own mother, Sarah, insisted was never cut out to be a fighter—"boxing was just the only way he knew of feeling close to his daddy."

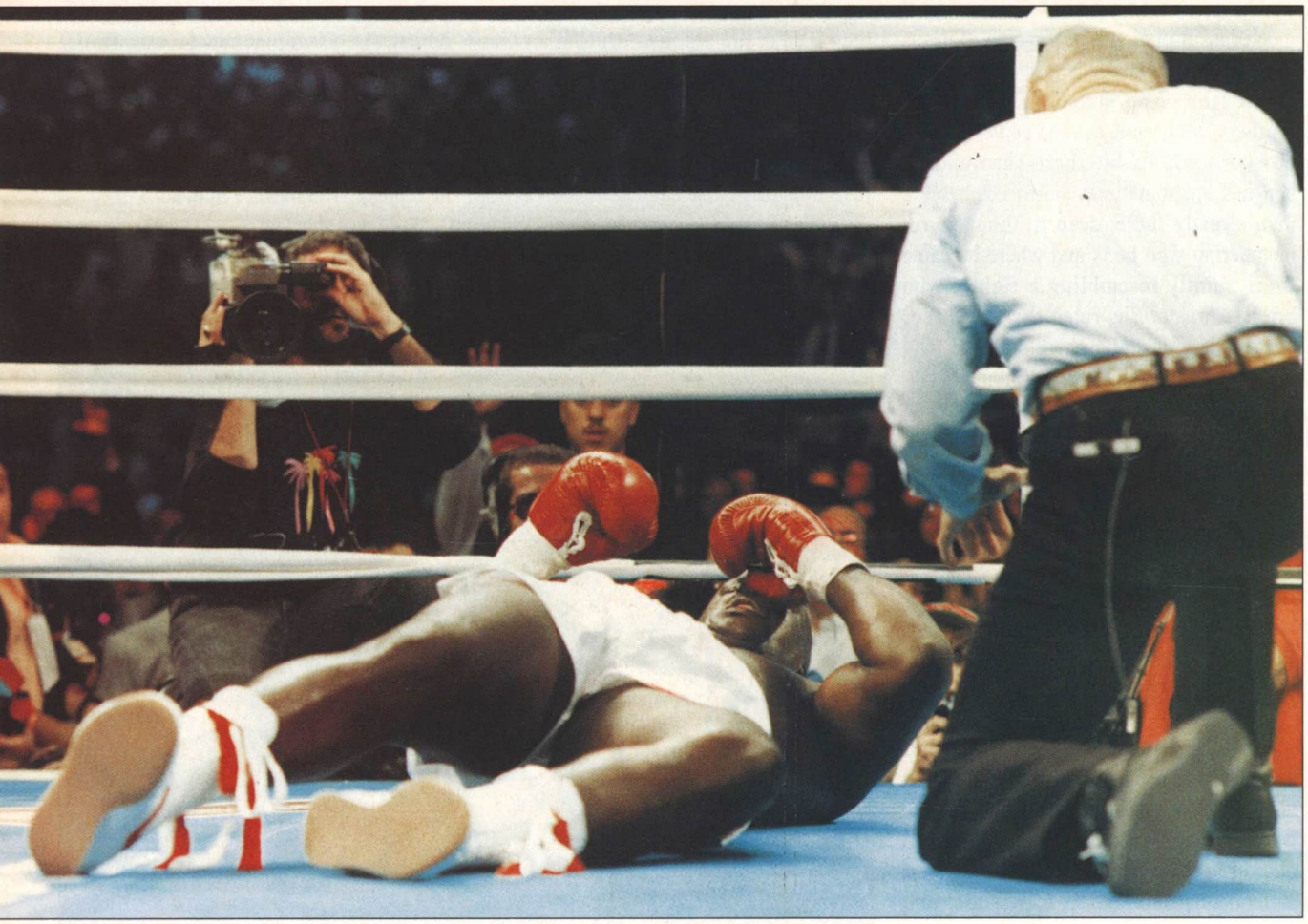
So when Lula reached his apartment and began to help him arrange the new furniture (Buster and Bertha were temporarily separated and he had moved out of their home), she asked him how he was. Buster knew her meaning. "I ain't worried about this dude," he told his mother, looking at her so hard that she began to cry. "You're mean," she said. "Damn right, I'm mean," he replied. "I'm mean. I'm mean."

Lula was shocked.

"But first thing she did when she left the apartment was go straight back to her friends," Douglas remembered in the liv-



In the greatest moment of his boxing career, Douglas rips Tyson with a left uppercut (above) before knocking him out to capture the heavyweight title in the 10th round (below) of a monumental upset. Sadly, the great victory did not make Douglas, whose mother had died less than a month before, a happy man. He lost the title in his next fight.



Referee Mills Lane counts out Douglas in the third round of his first title defense. A single right hand from Evander Holyfield ended Douglas' reign and began a long downward spiral for the ex-champ, who bottomed out when he went into a diabetic coma several years later.

ing room of his Quick Jab Ranch, almost an hour's drive out of Columbus, where he lives happily with Bertha, B.J., and Artie. "She looked them straight in the eye and she couldn't have been more pleased or more defiant as she told them: 'I been to see Buster and he gonna *kill* Mike Tyson. Maybe you should go tell *his* mom that!' Her friends stood there with their mouths hanging open, but my mom really believed it in her heart."

She took that belief to her grave. Three days later, only 23 days before he climbed the ring inside the Tokyo Dome, Buster's beloved mother passed away. She had been having seizures and recently had begun to speak about dying. In life, she was the person he called every morning as soon as he woke up, his best friend. In death, she became his inspiration.

"My uncle J.D. asked me right after we buried her if I was going to be able to box. I didn't waver. 'Hell yeah,' I said. It just intensified me. Pulling out is the last thing my Lula would have wanted," Douglas reflected, gazing at the picture of his mother that hangs on a wall in his home, above a cabinet displaying his WBC, WBA, and IBF championship belts and the gloves with which he slayed Tyson. "I had the perfect excuse, but I looked down in the casket and made a vow and went off to the gym with just one thing in my head: 'I can do this. Go do it.'

"My whole career had been about doubt. Doubt was always ringing my doorbell. Doubt was always there. Doubt made me lose fights to David Bey, Mike Williams, and Tony Tucker. People said the only reason I boxed was because of my dad. But my mom was just as tough. She would see me slacking off and ask me, 'Do you really want to do this?' She knew what it took. She had to, living with my dad. A fighter like him you had to kill to keep him down. There was no doubt in him at all. So the day my uncle asked me if I'd be able to box, I heard my mom and her never-ending question, 'Do you really want to do this?' and I knew I was gonna go do it."

It was like suddenly he metamorphosed into his father's son, a fighter's son, a man he could really be. "Hit him, honey," Bill would implore him in fights. "Take him out, little baby." There was a gentle sweetness in his voice, the same soft tone Buster remembered listening to joyfully as a boy as his dad regaled him with his "war stories." Real wars, against men like the ferocious Bennie Briscoe. Deadly nights when Bill was like Jack Johnson, the only black man in an arena packed with 10,000 people. Buster could be that man too. Or could he?

There were nights when he would get the wintergreen to rub on his father's bruised and beaten body while his brother, Robert, would fill the bath with ice. And for two days, Bill, his head swollen

and purple, would just lie in bed, staring at the ceiling. Did Buster really want to be like that?

"Why didn't you do something?" Bill asked him once after learning that Robert had been beaten up and 17-year-old Buster was scared off by the assailant's baseball bat.

"But, Dad, he had a bat."

"That ain't no excuse. If he got a bat, boy, get you a brick."

Maybe his dad was cut from a different rock. Yet they were never closer than on nights like the one in Philadelphia when Bill's fists ripped into Matthew Franklin, and 15-year-old Buster sat in the pro-Franklin crowd and felt his father's blood coursing through his veins. In round five, Franklin, who would later win the world light heavyweight title as Matthew Saad Muhammad, fell from a powerful blow to the chin and the fight looked over. Then a long count and a referee, who Douglas maintains, "must have been Saad's manager," came to Franklin's rescue. His head cleared and he won the fight—"my dad was clean robbed."

But everyone respected him. Larry Holmes, one of the greatest world heavyweight champions, approached him once like a starry-eyed kid, held out his hand and said, "Bill Douglas, you were my idol." Buster, sitting alongside his father, could almost have cried. He was the son of this man.

"He was an awesome man, my father, a true warrior," Douglas reflected. "I learnt a lot on my own, but 80 percent of it was growing up in my father's house, listening to his stories, appreciating the way a man could be, seeing every day the man he was. That man was freakin' tough. He showed me everything in life, even how to leave.

"My father died in 1999 of cancer of the esophagus. He wasted away to nothing, but every time he went to the hospital for chemo treatment, he drove himself there and he drove himself back. Every time. The day before he died he just had no energy left, couldn't get out of his chair to go back to bed. But he smacked my hand away soon as I moved across to help him. That's the man he was. He was everything. He was my hero."

Douglas' eyes were drawn to the TV in the center of the room, showing his knockout of Tyson, then relaying the words he spoke from the Tokyo Dome

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Douglas was greatly influenced by his father, former middleweight and light heavyweight contender Bill "Dynamite" Douglas. They are pictured together in 1997 during Buster's short-lived comeback.

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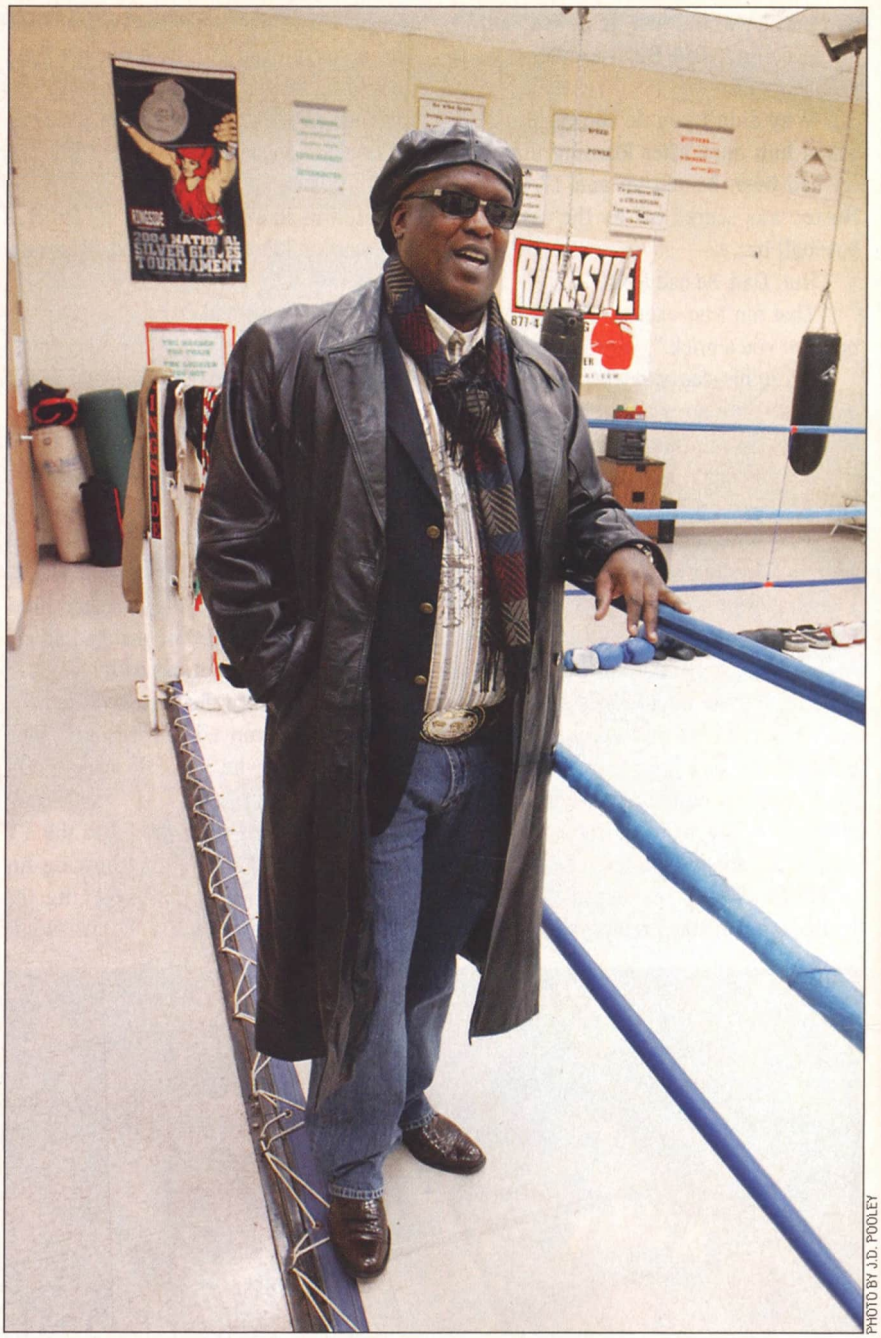

PHOTO BY J.D. POOLEY

Douglas poses at the Blackburn Recreational Center, where his father taught him to box many years ago. These days, Douglas lives an hour's drive outside of Columbus with his wife and two sons.

back home. "Dad," he cried, "this is for you. I love you."

***

Douglas climbed off the sofa and shook his head: "When a man loses, it's tough. I lost my next fight to Holyfield—should never have fought him, my head wasn't right—and I moved to Florida to get away from it all. I hadn't dealt with things, hadn't dealt with my mother's death and it all just got on top of me. Lula Pearl wasn't there no more to do a mother's corner work. She'd have brought me back.

"But I feel good now, feel good about my future, about the project I have going on in Columbus and I feel satisfied with what I accomplished in the ring. I'm in the books, man. When it's all over for me, people will know I was here. I won't have to write, 'Buster was here,' on no wall. They'll know." ■

Brian Doogan, THE RING's European correspondent, visited Douglas in Columbus, Ohio, in late-January 2005.

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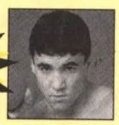

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★ Sir Henry Cooper
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★ Andrew Golota
★ Livingstone Bramble
★ James "Buster" Douglas
★ Danny "Little Red" Lopez

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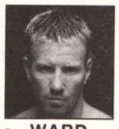

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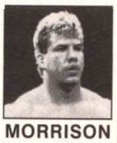

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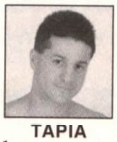

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SUMMARY

HEAVYWEIGHTS

John Ruiz No-Contest 12 James Toney
(Retains WBA Title)
Wladimir Klitschko KO 4 Eliseo Castillo
Calvin Brock W 10 Jameel McCline
Vassiliy Jirov KO 3 Forrest Neal
Michael Steed W 8 Julius Francis
Michael Grant KO 8 Wallace McDaniel
Oliver McCall W 8 Cornelius Ellis
Malcolm Tann KO 2 Leroy Childs
Riddick Bowe W 10 Billy Zumbrun
Dominick Guinn D 10 Friday Ahunanya
Eliecer Castillo KO 1 Otis Tisdale
Tye Fields W 8 Sedrick Fields
Sultan Ibragimov KO 11 Zuri Lawrence
Timor Ibragimov W 10 David Polk
Eddie Chambers KO 5 Melvin Foster
Malik Scott W 8 Shane Swartz
Gene Pukall KO 1 Frank Boehme

CRUISERWEIGHTS

Jean-Marc Mormeck W 12 Wayne Braithewaite
(Wins World Title)
Steve Cunningham W 10 Guillermo Jones
Lou Del Valle W 8 Dan Sheehan

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS

Andre Dirrell W 6 Carl Cockerham
Alejandro Berrio KO 9 Syd Vanderpool
Braimah Kamoko W 12 Michael Gbenga
Joe Spina W 8 Manu Ntoh

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Andre Ward W Disq. 3 Roy Ashworth
Ruben Groenewald W 10 Alan Gilbert
Willie Gibbs KO 2 Andres Pacheco
Robert Stieglitz KO 12 Lawrence Chapman
Lolenga Mock KO 10 Charles Brewer

MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Kingsley Ikeke KO 10 Antwun Echols
Chad Dawson KO 4 Efrain Garcia
Tarvis Simms D 10 Robert Frazier
Javier Alberto Mamani KO 2
Marcelo Alejandro Rodriguez
Arthur Abraham KO 5 Hector Javier Velazco
Miguel Hernandez W 10 Jonathan Corn
Fulgencio Zuniga D 10 Jose Luis Zertuche
Juan De La Rosa W 5 Tarick Salmaci
Joey Gilbert W 5 Jimmy Lange
Anthony Bonsante KO 3 Brent Cooper
Javier Alberto Mamani KO 2
Marcelo Alejandro Rodriguez
Jesus Gonzales W 8 Chance Leggett
Giovanni Lorenzo KO 2 Feliberto Alvarez

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Shane Mosley W 10 David Estrada
Roman Karmazin W 12 Keith Holmes
Joachim Alcine KO 6 Carl Daniels
Archak TerMeliksetian KO 1 William Evans
Paul Williams W 10 Terrance Cauthen
Marcos Avendaño KO 1 Fitz Vanderpool
Bryon Mackie KO 9 Ian MacKillop
Sergei Dzindziruk W 12 Jimmy Colas
Gotthard Hinteregger W 12 Jozsef Matolcsi
Marco Schulze KO 7 Douglas Bellini
Crazy Kim KO 2 Hiroyuki Maeda
Jose Antonio Celaya KO 2 Terry Wright
Johnny Molnar W 6 Dumont Welliver
Jose Arosemena KO 2 Elvis Guerrero
Ante Bilic W 10 Yury Tsybenko

WELTERWEIGHTS

Luis Collazo W 12 Jose Antonio Rivera
(Wins WBA welterweight title)
Antonio Margarito KO 5 Kermit Cintron

PHOTO BY LARS BARON/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Wladimir Klitschko tags Eliseo Castillo with a left en route to fourth round knockout

PHOTO BY KAZUHIRO NOGI/AFP/GETTY

Hozumi Hasegawa lands a right to the head of Veerapol Sahaprom

Thomas Damgaard KO 6 Ray Martinez
Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. KO 3 Travis Hartman
Rolando Reyes KO 9 Jose Antonio Ojeda
Joel Jair Julio KO 3 Carlos Wilfredo Vilches
Tadashi Yuba KO 1 Ryu Bando
Aswin Tjabuy KO 1 Lin Prana
David Jackson W 8 Rudy Lovato
David Barnes D 12 Ali Nuumbembe

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS

Steve Forbes KO 1 Sergio Macias
Herman Ngoudjo W 10 Arturo Urena
Donald Camarena W 12 James Crayton
Sataporn Singwangcha W 12 Ramil Caballes
Chad Brisson KO 4 Chucky Tschorniawsky
Rob Frankel W 8 Martin O'Malley

LIGHTWEIGHTS

Diego Corrales KO 10 Jose Luis Castillo
(Wins World Title)
Jorge Luis Noriega KO 8 Miguel Callist
Bilal Mohammad W 12 Alex Brew
Sergio Eduardo Gonzalez KO 4
Ricardo Daniel Silva
Andrey Devyataykin KO 9 Ničolay Feodorov
Martin Sanchez KO 1 Miguel Angel Galindo

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS

Marco Antonio Barrera KO 2 Mzonke Fana
(Retains WBC super featherweight title)
Cassius Baloyi W 12 Lehlo Ledwaba
Alex Arthur KO 9 Craig Docherty
Jason Litzau KO 5 Idelfonso Martinez
Jorge Rodrigo Barrios KO 4 Mike Anchondo
Billy Dib W 12 Robert Oyan
Jahongir Abdullaev W 4 Emin Aliev
Joel Cerrud KO 7 Rosano Lawrence
Jose Miguel Aguiniga KO 1 Jorge Garcia

FEATHERWEIGHTS

Johnny Tapia W 10 Frankie Archuleta
Jhonny Gonzalez KO 4 Trinidad Mendoza
Chris John W 12 Derrick Gainer
Agapito Sanchez KO 8 Ivan Alvarez
Robert Guerrero KO 12 Adrian Valdez
Diego Morales W 10 Alberto Ontiveros
Chonlatarn Piriyapinyo KO 3 Mohamad Sehu
Ariel Ricardo Elias KO 3
Cesar Celso Nazario Romero
Terdsak Jandaeng W 12 Jess Maca
Hiroyuki Enoki W 10 Zaiki Takemoto
Tomas Villa W 8 Edel Ruiz

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS

Joan Guzman W 12 Fernando Beltran Jr.
Somsak Sithchatchawal KO 6 Zsolt Botos
Shoji Kimura W 10 Yoshikane Nakajima
Ricardo Castillo KO 5 Hector Santana

BANTAMWEIGHTS

Hozumi Hasegawa W 12 Veeraphol Sahaprom
(Wins WBC bantamweight title)
Debind Thapa Tech. Win 6 Juan Carlos
Oswaldo Juarez KO 2 Jose Francisco Sarabia

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS

Fernando Montiel KO 7 Ivan Hernandez
Luis Maldonado KO 5 Guadalupe Arce
Anthony Mathias KO 4 Komrit Lukkuongmuekol
Karen Harutyunyan W 12 Tatsuo Hayashida
Nobuo NashiroW KO 10 Seiji Tanaka
Omar Salado W 10 Francisco Paredes

FLYWEIGHTS

Ricardo Vera W 10 Luis Briones
Lee Haskins W 10 Moses Kinyua
Daisuke Naito W 10 Nobuyuki Enomoto
Regina Halmich W 10 Hollie Dunaway

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS

Ken Nakajima W 10 Arman DeLaCruz

STRAWWEIGHTS

Yutaka Niida W 12 Jae Won Kim
(Retains WBA minimumweight title)
Katsunari Takayama W 12 Isaac Bustos
(Wins WBC minimumweight title)
Muhammad Rachman Tech. Draw 3
Fahlan Sakkreerin
(Retains IBF minimumweight title)
Rodel Mayol W 12 Takayuki Korogi
Herry Amol W 12 Sofyan Efendi

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The RING

FIGHTER *of the* MONTH

PHOTO BY TEDDY BLACKBURN/GETTY IMAGES

Twenty-five different men have held pieces of the cruiserweight title since Evander Holyfield abandoned the division in 1988. But none of the other 24 ever did what Jean-Marc Mormeck did this April. For the first time in 17 years, this much-maligned division has a universally recognized champion atop it, and that champion got there with a decisive victory over the man most observers had considered the division's best.

Beating Wayne Braithwaite isn't quite the same as beating Manny Pacquiao or Cory Spinks or Antonio Tarver. But Braithwaite was undefeated coming into the fight with Mormeck, and seemed a fairly well-rounded boxer-puncher. Even a prime Holyfield would've had to work a bit to beat him. So when Mormeck won the fight by a comfortable margin, knocking Braithwaite down along the way without ever appearing in any peril himself, the Frenchman erased any doubt over who the world's best 200-pounder is. There may still be a few other belts floating around, but there's only one champion.

It's not likely that any cruiserweight is going to be reeling in Fighter of the Year honors anytime soon. But there's no question that the new king of the cruisers is the Fighter of the Month.

• • • •

Jean-Marc Mormeck

RINGSIDE REPORTS

Jean-Marc Mormeck W 12 Wayne Braithwaite

Worcester, Massachusetts: They call him Jean-Marc, but heading into the most meaningful cruiserweight bout in nearly two decades, he could have just as easily been called Jean Doe. Burly Frenchman Mormeck was a major titleholder about to fight for the vacant RING cruiserweight championship, but nobody really knew much about him.

But by the time midnight rolled around on this spring night in New England, his name was on the lips of the thousands in attendance at the DCU Center, not to mention those taking in the Showtime telecast.

When you're being eclipsed by a fellah like Wayne Braithwaite during the prefight promotions, you know you're not exactly a superstar. So Mormeck, Noisy-le-Grand, France, offered the best remedy for such anonymity, punishing Braithwaite over 12 rounds to thrust himself to the forefront of the division.

While this one was deemed a tossup going in, it took little time to realize who was the superior combatant on this night. Mormeck, thick and rugged, capitalized on the relatively new cruiserweight limit of 200 pounds, checking in at 198, while Braithwaite, at 188 pounds, gave away 10 precious pounds of power and strength. Although Braithwaite, Brooklyn, New York, via Guyana, whipped scoring combinations in an impressive first round, they seemed to have little effect on Mormeck, who was constantly pushing forward, looking to unload heavy artillery. Mormeck began to make his opponent pay in the second round, digging hard shots that demanded Braithwaite's attention.

While Braithwaite's hands remained busy throughout the next three rounds, flinging hooks against his relentless stalker, his power made no impression against the 5'11" Mormeck. The first signs of real danger came in the fifth round, when Mormeck trapped "Big Truck" against the ropes and landed thudding pelts to his midsection and head. Braithwaite responded well, though, in the sixth round, when he unleashed a thrilling barrage to close out the round.

But the rally was short-lived. In the seventh round, Braithwaite tasted the inevitable—the canvas—for the first time in his career. It was a right hand to the temple that did it, dropping the dazed Braithwaite on his side. Up at six, Braithwaite switched into survival mode and held off—emphasis on "held"—Mormeck's assault for the remainder of the round.

Braithwaite, 29, would pay for such tactics in the eighth round, when referee Dick Flaherty (USA) deducted a point for excessive holding. However, it also sparked a brief comeback for Braithwaite, who compensated with his best rally of the night over the final 30 seconds of the round, as he landed one unanswered shot after the next on the surprised Mormeck.

But that was the last good stretch for Braithwaite, as the fight settled back into its earlier mode, with Mormeck, 32, unleashing hard hooks for the rest of the fight. Mormeck, 31-2 (21), also displayed a rare versatility, opting to outbox Braithwaite, 21-1 (17), over the last two rounds. While judge Chuck Hassett (USA) somehow scored it only 114-112 for Mormeck, Glenn Feldman (USA) saw it 115-111, and Peter Trematerra (USA) had it 116-110. THE RING also had it 116-110.

Television: Showtime
Promoter: Don King Productions
(4-2-05)
Ted Bodenrader

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND

Mormeck cracks Braithwaite with a right en route to unifying cruiser title

Louis Collazo W 12 Jose Antonio Rivera

Worcester, Massachusetts: The venue has become famous for its boisterous rock concerts, and on this night, the DCU Center (formerly known as the Worcester Centrum) was rocking again, this time with 8,567 fans screaming for their local hero.

When Rivera, 147, made his way to the canvas stage, there was plenty of head-banging to be enjoyed, as the Worcester welterweight and his Queens, New York, counterpart, Collazo, 147, teed off on each other's skulls for 12 thrilling rounds. The action easily surpassed the drama of the main event, Jean-Marc Mormeck's cruiserweight triumph over Wayne Braithwaite, as the stacked house was treated to one of the best fistic spectacles of 2005.

The only thing that silenced the fans was the fight's final verdict, as Jimmy Lennon Jr. delivered the bad news—Paul Barry (USA) scoring it 115-113 for Rivera, and the other two judges, Levi Martinez (USA) and Leo Gerstel (USA), seeing it 115-113 for Collazo. THE RING also scored it 115-113 for Collazo. The decision sprung an onslaught of boos from the angry patrons, not to mention an official protest from the Rivera camp.

But there was no denying the effects that a 19-month layoff had on the 32-year-old Rivera,

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND

Collazo is on target with a right during thriller with Rivera

as the workhorse seemed troubled by the stick-and-move style of the shifty southpaw, who was a late replacement for the ailing Thomas Damgaard. Sure, Rivera was clearly the stronger combatant through the first four rounds, his aggressive approach scoring early and often. When Rivera managed to trap Collazo along the ropes, he made him pay with stinging combinations. But as the fifth round began, Rivera's hungry snarl was replaced by a picture of frustration, his legs tiring from the continual pursuit. Just as Rivera slowed down, Collazo took over, and was scoring with hard straight lefts through Rivera's guard. Rivera was soon peering through swelling eyes. Furious exchanges ensued through the middle rounds, including a sensational one that capped off a spectacular seventh and momentarily swayed the momentum back in Rivera's favor.

But Collazo, 23, responded with a solid eighth, and closed the round with a nasty barrage that had Rivera reeling helplessly against the ropes. With the fight apparently up for grabs, Collazo showcased his versatility in the 11th round and used effective boxing to crack Rivera with stiff combinations.

It set the stage for a dramatic 12th, as both welterweights let loose in one of the year's best rounds. Collazo, 25-1 (11), unloaded the goods down the stretch, opening a small cut above his opponent's left eye with a riveting right hand. But for Rivera, 37-4-1 (24), the real wound was administered to his resume, in the form of a close, disputed decision.

The referee was Jay Nady (USA).

Television: Showtime

Promoter: Don King Productions

(4-2-05)

Ted Bodenrader

Vic Darchinyan KO 8 Mzukisi Sikali

Homebush Bay, Australia: In a battle of highly regarded southpaws, IBF flyweight beltholder Darchinyan, Sydney, Australia, proved that his title-winning kayo of long-reigning Irene Pacheco last December was no fluke by defeating world-rated Sikali, Port Elizabeth, South Africa, in a competitive first title defense. The partisan crowd at the State Sports Centre was delighted when Sikali pulled a "no mas" at 2:28 of the eighth round, making the Sydney-based Armenian a TKO winner.

The aggressive Darchinyan, 112, started well, taking the first two rounds with quick, powerful bursts to the head and body. But Sikali, 112, battled right back in rounds three and four, carrying both stanzas with sharp combinations and showing the ability that carried him to a pair of breakthrough wins over Hawk Makepula in 2002 and 2003. The momentum swung back in the other direction in the fifth, as the 29-year-old titlist hurt Sikali with a series of hard combinations. But in the sixth, it was Sikali, 33, who was in charge, outboxing Darchinyan from long range.

The fight took a decisive turn late in the seventh when Darchinyan, 23-0 (18), wobbled the challenger badly just before the bell. The local fighter, leading by scores of 68-65 and 67-66 (twice), continued to dish out pain in the eighth until a battered Sikali, 29-7-2 (17), signaled to referee Pete Podgorski (USA) that he didn't want to continue.

Darchinyan indicated afterward that he hopes to meet WBA counterpart Lorenzo Parra next.

Promoter: Jeff Fenech

(3-27-05)

Marco Antonio Barrera KO 2 Mzonke Fana

El Paso, Texas: Capetown, South Africa's Fana, 128½, proved to be the latest in a growing list of inept number-one contenders propped up by the shameless WBC when he suffered a brutal one-punch knockout at the hands of future Hall of Famer Barrera. It was difficult to find anything redeeming in the pointless spectacle of watching a grossly overmatched Fana, 31, massacred by the Mexican legend, but at least it was mercifully short and, with the mandatory now behind him, Barrera, 32, can look toward an anticipated fourth match against Erik Morales or possible redemption against Manny Pacquiao.

Weighing 130 pounds, Barrera looked firmer and better acclimated to the junior lightweight ranks than in his first outing at the weight, when he took the WBC belt from Morales last November.

From the opening bell, Barrera stalked his opponent, belaboring him to the body before staggering Fana with the first right hand to the head that he threw. A self-proclaimed "jabbing specialist," Fana, 22-3 (8), looked bewildered by Barrera's superior speed and snappier blows. Fana circled behind a pumping left lead, but it was quickly apparent he had little else of substance to thwart Barrera's marauding attack. At the midway point of the round, Barrera snapped Fana's head with a stiff jab before another lead right wobbled him for the second time in the round. Thereafter, Barrera began to attack with impunity, and the fight quickly degenerated into a predatory game of cat and mouse.

Although Fana found improved rhythm in the second, Barrera, Mexico City, Mexico, managed to outwork him with the jab in the opening minute before ratcheting up his attack. After turning Fana's

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Barrera belts mismatched Fana with left to the beltline

body 90 degrees with a lead right, Barrera landed a followup right that was so debilitating, it seems the early favorite for Knockout of the Year. The punch caught Fana on the side of the chin, violently jarring his head before pitching him backward to the mat.

As the partisan crowd of 10,114 in the Don Haskins Center erupted, referee Laurence Cole (USA) didn't bother to count and waved the mismatch over at 1:48. Remarkably, Fana remained lucid while on the canvas, even protesting that Barrera had fouled him with a low punch seconds before fielding the fight-ending blow. But from Cole's perspective—and that of most onlookers—terminating the bout was the correct and humane thing to do.

Afterward, Fana put up a more rigorous challenge in protesting Cole's decision than he had against Barrera, claiming he should have been issued a count. "I was still okay and able to fight," he said, while admitting Barrera, whom he called a "great champion," had caught him with a perfect right hand.

"He threw a lot of good punches. I thought he was going to move more, but he was really more aggressive," a respectful Barrera, 60-4 (42), said of his outclassed opponent afterward. When asked about the mounting public interest in a fourth tilt with Morales, Barrera was open to the idea: "I'm quite aware of it after that great victory that Morales had over Pacquiao. If that's what the fans want, I'm here. We can talk about it."

Television: HBO Pay-Per-View
Promoter: Golden Boy Promotions
(4-9-05)

Fernando Montiel KO 7 Ivan Hernandez

El Paso, Texas: What promised to be a dramatic shootout between two talented Mexican junior bantamweights in the co-feature to Barrera-Fana ended up as a near perfect display of boxing by Montiel. The 26-year-old reclaimed the WBO belt by dominating a game but outclassed "Choko" Hernandez before closing the show with vicious bodywork in the seventh.

Montiel lost the belt on a majority decision to Mark Johnson in '03 in a restrained effort, only to see it fall into the hands of Hernandez, who battered Johnson into an eighth-round submission last September. But after Montiel's virtuoso performance over Hernandez, 22, it can be concluded that, in predicting the outcome of a fight, sometimes as much can be gained from reading tealeaves as from studying common opponents.

The 5'4" Montiel, 113, may have been outsized by the 5'6" Hernandez, 115, but he was the larger presence in the ring. Hernandez established himself as the aggressor in a heated first round that saw both men trading stiff jabs on even terms. In the second, Montiel began to utilize effective lateral movement and set to work with impressive combinations, unloading a diverse array of zipping punches that would leave the notably slower Hernandez frustrated for the duration of the fight.

By the third, Montiel exuded confidence as he commanded the tempo and consistently caught Hernandez with lead left hooks and crisp overhand rights. Although he was the smaller and more tactical fighter, Montiel was also establishing himself as the stronger puncher. Hernandez managed to temporarily sway the momentum in round four, scoring with a left hook and right hand that drew blood from Montiel's nose. But at the bell, Montiel unleashed a blistering four-punch salvo with his back to the ropes that clinched him the heat and reasserted his dominance for the remaining rounds.

In the sixth, Montiel landed a snapping hook to the temple followed by a grazing right hand. Hernandez' legs went out from under him and he collapsed to the canvas for the fight's first knock-

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Montiel (left) was masterful outboxing and outpunching Hernandez

down. Looking less than sturdy upon rising from the canvas, a resolute Hernandez nevertheless went on the attack, and the two fighters exchanged furiously.

Opening the seventh, Montiel, 30-1-1 (23), boxed with fluid aggression, hammered Hernandez with hooks, and split his guard with a jarring right uppercut. Desperately, Hernandez, 20-1-1 (13), pressed his attack once more, but the strategy worked against him when he forced his adversary to the ropes. Montiel deftly circled away from the strands and simultaneously sunk a left hook to the ribs, momentarily paralyzing Hernandez before he dropped to the canvas.

"It was a good bodyshot," Montiel would later say. "I felt it when I hit him and I knew I hurt him with the shot."

The fight looked to be over as a grimacing Hernandez assumed a sitting position and referee Rafael Ramos (USA) began tolling the count. Courageously, Hernandez, Houston, Texas, jumped to his feet at eight to reenter the fray, but it was clear that Montiel would soon apply the finishing touches. Seconds later, Montiel dug home another left hook to the body that left Hernandez wincing but still upright. Retreating for the first time, Hernandez bent at the waist in anticipation of a further body assault, and it soon came in the form of another perfectly placed hook to the ribs by Montiel, Los Mochis, Mexico. The punch caved Hernandez for good at 1:48 of the round as Ramos stood over the fighter and waved the bout over without administering a count.

"In reality, I struggled to make this weight. I'm too big for this division," said Hernandez, who was emphatic that his next fight would be at 118 pounds. "We knew he was going to move around once he felt my punches, but he's a good fighter."

Television: HBO Pay-Per-View
Promoter: Golden Boy Promotions
(4-9-05)

Jorge Barrios KO 4 Mike Anchondo

Miami, Florida: Fighting through the emotional pain of losing both a close friend and an infant child in the weeks leading up to this bout at Miccosukee Resort and Gaming, awkwardly effective Argentine Barrios scored a highly impressive victory in his second fight on U.S. soil, taking out his frustrations on a mighty meek version of "Mighty Mike." Some speculated afterward that the previously undefeated Anchondo might have performed so poorly because he was facing personal problems. If so, he ought to take tips from Barrios on how to draw strength from hardship.

Anchondo's failures began a day before the fight, when he scaled 134¾ pounds and had to surrender $30,000 of his purse and the WBO 130-pound belt. Barrios checked in at a ready 128½, making him eligible to claim the title (and the money). He fought for the same belt in the same city back in August '03, when he lost by 12th-round kayo in a thriller against Acelino Freitas. Remembering Barrios' tremendous effort that night, the crowd was on his side from the start, boisterously chanting "Ar-gen-tina" as he made his way into the ring.

The listless Anchondo, La Puente, California, was never in the fight. Barrios got off quicker from the get-go, landing both a solid left

and a noteworthy right in the opening minute. With 30 seconds to go in the first round, "La Hiena" seemed to stun Anchondo with a left to the head and a left to the body.

Barrios continued to outbox the Californian in the second, and early in the third, he landed a left hook that convinced Mighty Mike to hold. Before long, Anchondo was tying Barrios up every time the feisty South American got close.

With 15 seconds to go in the third, Barrios scored with a right hand to the ear that put Anchondo on the canvas. The 22-year-old easily beat the count and was soon saved by the bell, but he looked utterly despondent as trainer Buddy McGirt tried to motivate him in the corner.

Barrios, 28, began round four winging wide shots, scoring a few times with that same right hand to the ear. A right to the chin hurt Anchondo, and after a followup flurry (which appeared to include an accidental clash of heads), Mighty Mike dropped to the canvas. He again beat the count, but moments later, a searing left to the body floored Anchondo again. Barrios, 43-2-1 (31), blasted him with a left to the head after Anchondo hit the canvas, however, prompting referee Tommy Kimmons (USA) to overreact and take two points from La Hiena for a foul that seemed far from flagrant. The questionable decision of the ref soon became irrelevant, though, when McGirt ran into the ring before the action could resume and signaled at the 2:00 mark that Anchondo, 25-1 (18), had had enough.

Television: ESPN2

Promoters: Main Events, Team Freedom

(4-8-2005)

Katsunari Takayama W 12 Isaac Bustos

Osaka, Japan: Unheralded Japanese speedster Takayama, 105, surprisingly outsped and outlegged defending titlist Bustos, 105, Mexico, all the way to capture the WBC strawweight belt by a well-received unanimous decision over 12 fast frames. Judge Bill Clancy (USA) scored it 117-111, Brad Vocale (Australia) saw it 117-112, and Francisco Vazquez (Spain) had it 115-113, all for the shorter footworker. The referee, towering over the strawweights, was American Vic Drakulich.

The 21-year-old Takayama, nine years the beltholder's junior, battered Bustos from all angles in the first round, and took a healthy lead over the first seven sessions. Bustos, who had dethroned Eagle Kyowa by a fluky, injury-induced fourth-round stoppage last December, kept throwing punches in the air against the very elusive target and absorbed much punishment from the challenger's light but busy combinations. After fighting for 10 up-and-down years before winning a title, Bustos was helplessly watching the belt slip away in his first defense.

Bustos seemingly took the eighth, but Takayama was in command in the next three rounds with his faster and more accurate combinations, while the Mexican kept missing many blows. The final round saw Bustos put his heart and pride on his display, as he kept stalking the fading challenger with roundhouse shots. Bustos, 24-7-3 (13), tried to find a rhythm and threw big shots in an effort to make the fight close. But Takayama's youth and desire helped him endure his opponent's late surge.

The newly crowned Takayama, 15-1 (7), is supposed to make his first defense against former beltholder and fellow Japanese standout Eagle Kyowa.

Promoter: Green Tsuda Promotions

(4-4-05)

Joe Koizumi

Muhammad Rachman Tech. Draw 3 Fahlan Sakkreerin

Merauke City, Indonesia: In December 2004, a title fight in Indonesia between Chris John and Jose Rojas ended in a highly disappointing, headbutt-induced fourth-round technical draw. Just four months later, history repeated itself in the same country. Fighting in the town of his birth and making his first defense of the IBF 105-pound title that he won via controversial decision over Daniel Reyes, Rachman retained the strap in a most unsatisfying way, emerging with a technical draw when his fight against veteran Sakkreerin, who held this same title from 1990-'92, was stopped in the third round due to a bad cut on the right side of Rachman's temple.

Very little happened in round one, as both fighters boxed cautiously. In the second round, Rachman, 103½, Probolinggo, Indonesia, turned up the aggression, leading Sakkreerin, 105, Thailand, to up his output as well. In the third, the fight moved to the inside, where the heads of the 37-year-old Sakkreerin and the 32-year-old Rachman came together violently, leaving the titleholder with a sizeable gash. On the advice of the ringside physician, referee John Wright (USA) called a halt to the bout, bringing Rachman's record to 49-7-4 (21) and Sakkreerin's to 54-4-3 (23).

Once his cut has healed, Rachman's options will include a rematch with the Thailander, a bout with mandatory challenger Omar Soto, or a unification with WBO beltholder Ivan Calderon.

(4-5-05) ■

PHOTO BY JIJI PRESS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Takayama drills Bustos with a right in title-winning outing in Osaka

New Face

(Continued from page 24)

in his impeccable boxing skills. Depending on the occasion, he can switch from scientific boxer to brawler, and he's already shown a great ability to put away virtually everyone placed in front of him.

On a personal level, his life is quite admirable. Despite coming from a poor and broken family, Mayol was able to obtain a scholarship to attend college, where he completed three years of a degree in business accounting. Thanks to his ring earnings, he already owns a car and will soon finish construction of his own house. Clearly, his main focus is boxing and family.

"After training, I go home," Mayol said. "I like to play with my baby. Then I prepare for tomorrow and more training."

Naturally, in these days of Pac-Man mania, any new face on the Philippine scene has to deal with the inevitable comparison to the current national hero. While Mayol has nothing but praise and reverence for Pacquiao, he wants to make it clear that he is his own man.

"I idolize him," Mayol said. "I admire his power and his heart. He has a will to win, and I get inspired by that. But I'm different than him. I can box and slug. I believe I am a smarter fighter."

Mayol also possesses something that Pac-Man doesn't—a crushing hook.

"If I hit my opponent with my left hook," Mayol said, "he's going down."

Mayol's smart enough to know that popularity can be fickle. He's campaigning in a weight division that is often forgotten by even hardcore boxing fans. On the other hand, if he keeps racking up victories and then a title or two, life in the Philippines will be good, as an appetite for winners amongst Filipinos knows no bounds.

"I'd like to be popular, he said, "but you don't need to be popular to be world champion."

Mayol's grounded personality was born out of some difficulty he encountered while growing up in a poor Mandaue City neighborhood teeming with drugs and bullies. When he was only eight years old, his mother and father separated and he was sent to live with his grandmother.

"At the time I'm sad because I have no more family," he recalled, "but they were fighting everyday, so it's better they didn't stay together."

Mayol managed to avoid the drugs, but at the age of 13, it was the bullies and a love of basketball that changed the direction of his life. One day while playing ball, a schoolyard thug beat him up.

"I couldn't retaliate because I didn't know how to fight," Mayol recalled. "I wanted to learn how to fight."

He found his way to the gym of Tony Aldeguer, a successful Cebu businessman who also runs a highly regarded gym, where he trains and manages amateur and professional fighters.

"When he first came to my gym, he really stood out," Aldeguer said. "He has an inborn talent."

Mayol lived in the gym, but he had to adhere to Aldeguer's strict discipline regime, part of which included staying in school. With Aldeguer's help, Mayol was able to get a college scholarship. The levelheaded fighter readily acknowledges the importance of an education.

"Tony Aldeguer taught me to stand on my own, what to do in my life, and what's important," Mayol said. "I want something to do after boxing. I don't want to end up like so many other boxers."

Under Aldeguer's guidance, Mayol tallied impressive numbers, going 152-3 as an amateur and winning four national championships.

He first fought professionally in 2000 and has barely been touched since. Although the skill level of fighters in Asia can be tricky to judge, six of Mayol's wins have been overseas, with three victories in Japan and three in Indonesia.

In '01, Mayol changed managers, moving to the stable of Joy Ouano, who quickly developed a strong appreciation for his actions in and out of the ring.

"In terms of discipline and motivation, he's a model," Ouano said. "He trains every day. You don't have to tell him to go out jogging, as he has his own will to train. In the ring, Rodel thinks when he fights and can adjust to the style of his opponent."

So far, the biggest problem handling Mayol has been finding solid opponents. "There are not many challenges here in Asia," Ouano said.

Although at times the business side of sport has presented some formidable obstacles. Traveling to Japan in '03 to challenge for the OPBF title, Mayol and entourage were given a whirlwind tour, thanks to the Japanese promoter, who made sure that what should have been a five-hour journey ended up taking two days, with Mayol arriving at four in the morning the day of the weigh-in.

"They thought it would tire Rodel," Ouano said of the ploy. "But it actually made him mad."

Mayol brushed aside the wear and tear of the arduous trip and knocked out Genki Ohnaka in the first round to claim the regional belt.

Since then, he's easily defended the OPBF title three times and is currently ranked number 10 by THE RING. Now Mayol waits patiently for a crack at the big time. The lack of opportunities in Asia has forced Ouano to think about following the recent trend in the Philippines by sending Mayol to the United States, ala Pacquiao. Still, they may eventually find their pot of gold in Japan, where two 105-pound belts are currently held and where the division commands more money than in any other country.

Mayol was supposed to be next in line to fight the new WBC titleholder, Katsunari Takayama, who decisioned Mexican Isaac Bustos in April in Osaka. But the WBC ordered Takayama to defend against former beltholder Eagle Kyowa. Kyowa lost the title to Bustos a few months earlier when he dislocated his shoulder in the fourth round. Mayol has been promised a shot at the winner of Takayama-Kyowa.

If anything, this revolving title scenario seems to indicate that the field in the strawweight division could be ripe for a dominant champion. "Right now," said Aldeguer, "the opposition in the smaller weights is not that formidable. The division is wide open."

While it may be too early to anoint Mayol the next Manny Pacquiao, he's obviously thinking big.

"I only have three dreams," Mayol said. "To become world champion, finish my studies, and get money for my family. I think I'm ready now. I want to fight anyone, anywhere." ■

Ted Lerner is THE RING's Philippines correspondent.

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CLASSIC

From THE RING, July 1956

"I WON'T BE BACK," SAYS MARCIANO

Abdicated Heavyweight King, Like Tunney, Vows Retirement Is For Good

By Dan Daniel

On September 23, 1952, Rocky Marciano knocked out Jersey Joe Walcott and became the heavyweight champion of the world. On April 27, 1956, after a title tenure of not quite four years, Marciano returned the championship to boxing and the public, and, nearing the age of 33, retired.

Two interesting stories are involved. First, why, after so short a reign, did Marciano quit? Second, what happens now? Who is likely to come through the eliminations, which must be held to set up a new king of the ring?

When Rocky announced his retirement, he found many skeptics among the sportswriters, and the fans, as well.

These doubters insisted that no champion ever left the ring while there still were profitable engagements in the offing. They pointed out that after having been just as fervent as Marciano in his protestations of intention to stay retired, Joe Louis had been forced back into competition by his tax difficulties.

They dug all the way back to Jim Jeffries, and his return to fight Jack Johnson after he had thrown the title into the ring.

They thumbed through the life and times of John L. Sullivan to support their skepticism. They showed how, after having quit the ring to go into the saloon business

Rocky Marciano, with manager Al Weill to his right and trainer Charley Goldman hanging over his shoulder, announced his retirement and explained: "I've had it. It was tough making the decision to retire and I don't think anything will ever change my mind about not making a comeback."

in New York, Jim Corbett had been lured back to engage in his memorable 23-round struggle with Jeffries.

The doubters insisted that the Marciano retirement was part of a scheme to clean up the International Boxing Club's case in the Federal courts.

The skeptics had yet another angle. They said that Marciano had gone as far as he could, financially, as holder of the championship.

They envisioned fresh interest in the heavyweight class if, with Rocky out of the picture, a new champion was crowned, and Marciano then challenged for the title.

But Marciano firmly stilled those stories that have been making the rounds, having him eyeing a big gate with the new champion a year from now. "I won't be back," said Rocky. "I've had it. It was tough making the decision to retire and I don't think anything will ever change my mind about not making a comeback."

THE RING is quite willing, with regret, to accept Marciano at his word. He has retired, and it expects him to remain retired.

Marciano is a forthright, honest, un-conniving man. He is not one for plots and schemes. He lives modestly, and is fortunate to have married a girl in his own class, with a sense of thrift and the right way of life.

Rocky retired because he had no one else to beat. And the chore of keeping in shape had palled on him. However, let us first discuss what is going to happen now that the heavyweight championship has become vacant.

In his valedictory, Marciano said that Archie Moore, first, and then Floyd Patterson and Hurricane Jackson stood in line for the tournament to be conducted by Jim Norris and his IBC.

In listing the field he was leaving behind him, Marciano showed no great enthusiasm. He had knocked out the best contender, Moore, and would have had little trouble with Patterson and Jackson, in the same ring on the same night, had he continued in competition.

However, it's always that way when a champion quits. Those who appraise the lingering field do so under the handicaps of a psychological block. The best man in the class was out, so that only the second and third best were left.

Recollect how the experts wailed when Louis retired. They called it the most lackluster worthless lot in the history of boxing.

But Ezzard Charles came along. Jersey Joe came along. And eventually Marciano fought his way to the leadership of the field, and boxing found itself with a new powerhouse.

THE RING RATINGS, July 1956

Sandy Saddler

HEAVYWEIGHTS
World Champ: Vacant
1. **Archie Moore,** San Diego, CA
2. **Tommy Jackson,** Far Rockaway, NY
3. **Bob Baker,** Pittsburgh, PA
4. **Floyd Patterson,** Brooklyn, NY
5. **John Holman,** Chicago, IL
6. **Johnny Summerlin,** Detroit, MI
7. **Willie Pastrano,** New Orleans, LA
8. **Harold Carter,** Linden, NJ
9. **Bob Satterfield,** Chicago, IL
10. **Eddie Machen,** Fresno, CA

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
World Champ: Archie Moore, San Diego, CA
1. **Yolande Pompey,** Trinidad, B.W. I.
2. **Chuck Spieser,** Lansing, MI
3. **Gerhard Hecht,** Germany
4. **Hans Stretz,** Germany
5. **Willi Hoepner,** Germany
6. **Joey Maxim,** Cleveland, OH
7. **Harold Johnson,** Philadelphia, PA
8. **Ron Barton,** England
9. **Marty Marshall,** Detroit, MI
10. **Charles Colin,** France

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
World Champ: Ray Robinson, New York, NY
1. **Charley Humez,** France
2. **Gene Fullmer,** West Jordan, UT
3. **Carl (Bobo) Olson,** Honolulu, HI
4. **Bobby Boyd,** Chicago, IL
5. **Milo Savage,** Salt Lake City, UT
6. **Ralph Jones,** Yonkers, NY
7. **Charley Joseph,** New Orleans, LA
8. **Eduardo Lausse,** Argentina
9. **Rocky Castellani,** Cleveland, OH
10. **Holly Mims,** Washington, D.C.

WELTERWEIGHTS
World Champ: Johnny Saxton, Brooklyn, NY
1. **Carmen Basilio,** Syracuse, NY
2. **Tony DeMarco,** Boston, MA
3. **Isaac Logart,** Cuba
4. **Vince Martinez,** Paterson, NJ
5. **Virgil Akins,** St. Louis, MO
6. **Art Aragon,** Los Angeles, CA
7. **Ramon Fuentes,** Los Angeles, CA
8. **George Barnes,** Australia
9. **Emilio Marconi,** Italy
10. **Joe Miceli,** New York, NY

LIGHTWEIGHTS
World Champ: Wallace (Bud) Smith, Cincinnati, OH
1. **Ralph Dupas,** New Orleans, LA
2. **Duilio Loi,** Italy
3. **James Carter,** New York, NY
4. **Cisco Andrade,** Compton, CA
5. **Johnny Gonsalves,** Oakland, CA
6. **Ludwig Lightburn,** British Honduras
7. **Larry Boardman,** Marlboro, CT
8. **Joe Brown,** New Orleans, LA
9. **Frankie Ryff,** New York, NY
10. **L.C. Morgan,** Youngstown, OH

FEATHERWEIGHTS
World Champ: Sandy Saddler, New York, NY
1. **Fred Galiana,** Spain
2. **Hogan (Kid) Bassey,** Nigeria
3. **Cherif Hamia,** France
4. **Carmelo Costa,** Brooklyn, NY
5. **Flash Elorde,** Philippines
6. **Martin Rodriguez,** Cuba
7. **Paul Jorgensen,** Port Arthur, TX
8. **Ray Famechon,** France
9. **Victor (Sonny) Leon,** Venezuela
10. **Jose Hernandez,** Spain

BANTAMWEIGHTS
World Champ: Robert Cohen, France
1. **Mario D'Agata,** Italy
2. **Raton Macias,** Mexico
3. **Billy Peacock,** Los Angeles, CA
4. **Little Cezar,** Philippines
5. **Jose Lopez,** Mexico
6. **Alphonse Halimi,** France
7. **Jean Renard,** Belgium
8. **Kevin James,** Australia
9. **Piero Rollo,** Italy
10. **Ricardo Moreno,** Mexico

FLYWEIGHTS
World Champ: Pascual Perez, Argentina
1. **Memo Diez,** Mexico
2. **Dai Dower,** Wales
3. **Young Martin,** Spain
4. **Leo Espinosa,** Philippines
5. **Hitoshi Misako,** Japan
6. **Danny Kid,** Philippines
7. **Tanny Campo,** Philippines
8. **Jake Tuli,** South Africa
9. **Guy Schatt,** France
10. **Oscar Suarez,** Cuba

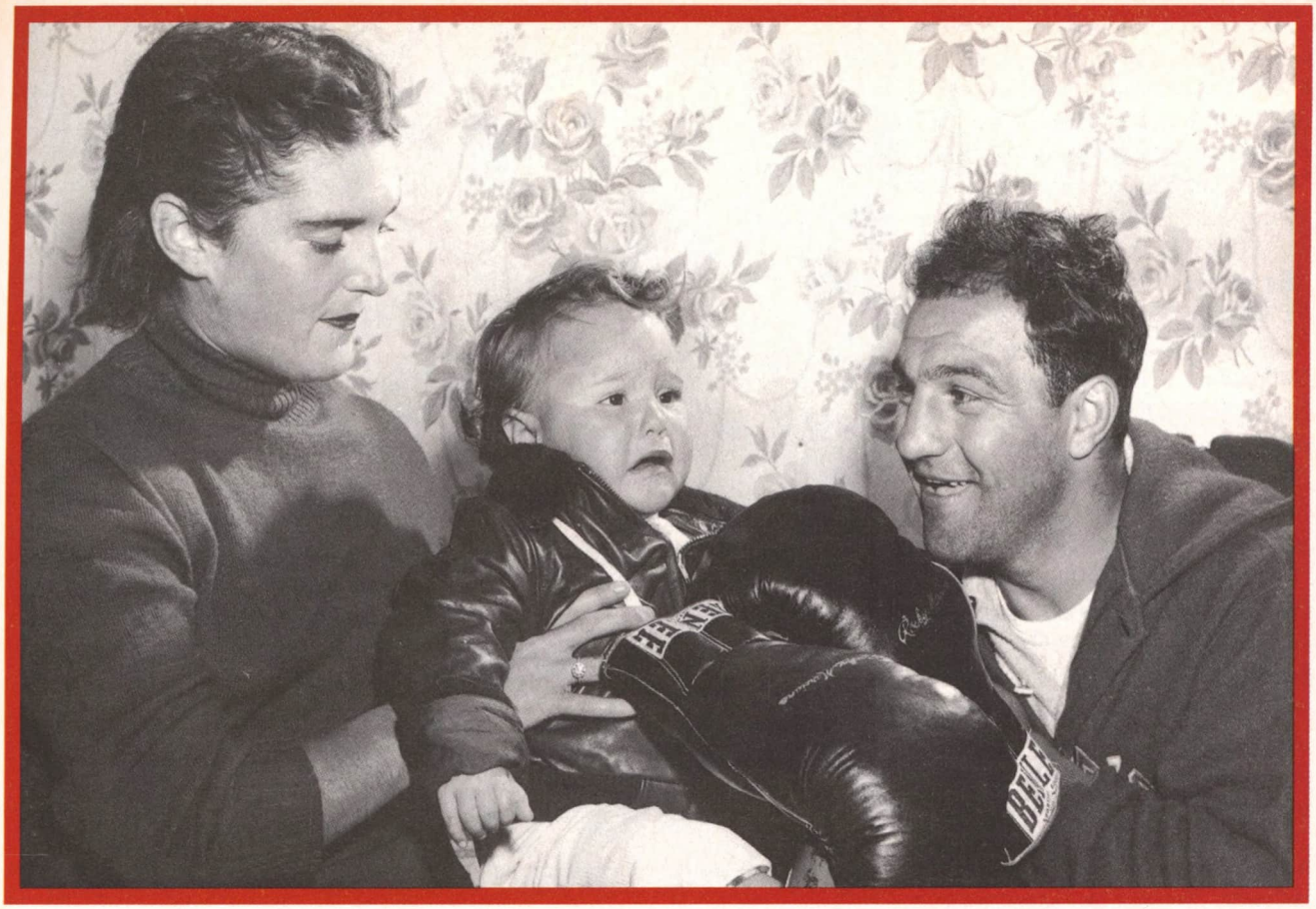
When Jeffries retired, the heavyweight division looked forlorn and bereft. But along came one Jack Johnson, who bequeathed the title to Jess Willard, who was knocked out by Jack Dempsey. "The Manassa Mauler" brought to boxing lush years hitherto undreamed of.

It is quite true that the field that Marciano has left behind is not very attractive. But it has possibilities, especially in the still growing, still developing Patterson.

It is conceivable that Moore, who is a polished trouper and a seasoned veteran, will become Marciano's successor. But before long, Moore will find age and wear and tear pulling him down.

The way things shape up now, Moore is the man to stand on the sidelines and await developments in the elimination tournament. Patterson will fight Jackson on June 8. Patterson's handlers are reported to have no stomach for this showdown at this time. They would like to steer the former Olympic champion through another half dozen schooling bouts with unthreatening opposition. However, the time has come for Patterson to come out boldly and show his class.

On Marciano's retirement, Norris felt that he had an elimination field of 11 fight-



Spending more time with his wife, Barbara, and daughter, Mary Ann, was one of the reasons Marciano gave for deciding to retire from the ring. But troubles with the International Boxing Club, which was undergoing a federal investigation, might have also played a role.

ers: Moore, Patterson, Jackson, Johnny Summerlin, Willie Pastrano, Bob Satterfield, John Holman, Bob Baker, Nino Valdes, Harold Carter, and Eddie Machen.

The day Rocky retired, THE RING came out with this rating of heavyweights: 1. Moore; 2. Jackson; 3. Baker; 4. Holman; 5. Summerlin; 6. Pastrano; 7. Carter; 8. Satterfield; 9. Machen; 10. Valdes.

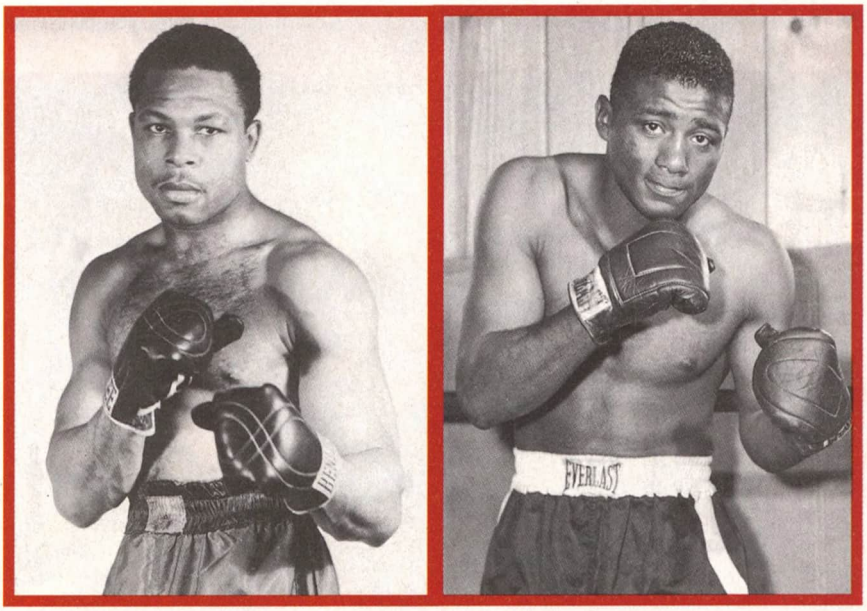
Patterson was not ranked as a heavyweight, but was listed as the top contender for the light heavyweight title, over Gerhard Hecht and Chuck Spieser. But after Rocky's retirement and Patterson's entry into the eliminations, in the new ratings, Floyd's name was found in fifth place among the heavyweights and removed from the light heavy division.

Certainly, this field, for the fans, boiled down to Moore, Patterson, and Jackson.

Something could be done with these ingredients. Possibly, something important. Moore, who on Rocky's retirement had the bout with Yolande Pompey in England in prospect, was keeping in trim by fighting.

While Marciano was making up his mind about retiring, nobody among those 11 named above appeared to have a chance with the hard-hitting Rocky.

Norris had a return bout with Moore in mind, but Jim could not sell this idea to himself, with any degree of conviction, that it could make money.



What next? The heavyweight division all of a sudden became wide open after Marciano's retirement. Archie Moore (above left) became the leading candidate to succeed The Rock. But rising stars such as Floyd Patterson (above right) were also under consideration to take over as the heavyweight king.

It is possible that, by one of those strange quirks that so often develop in boxing, the champion's retirement eventually will turn out to be a good thing and conducive to fistic prosperity.

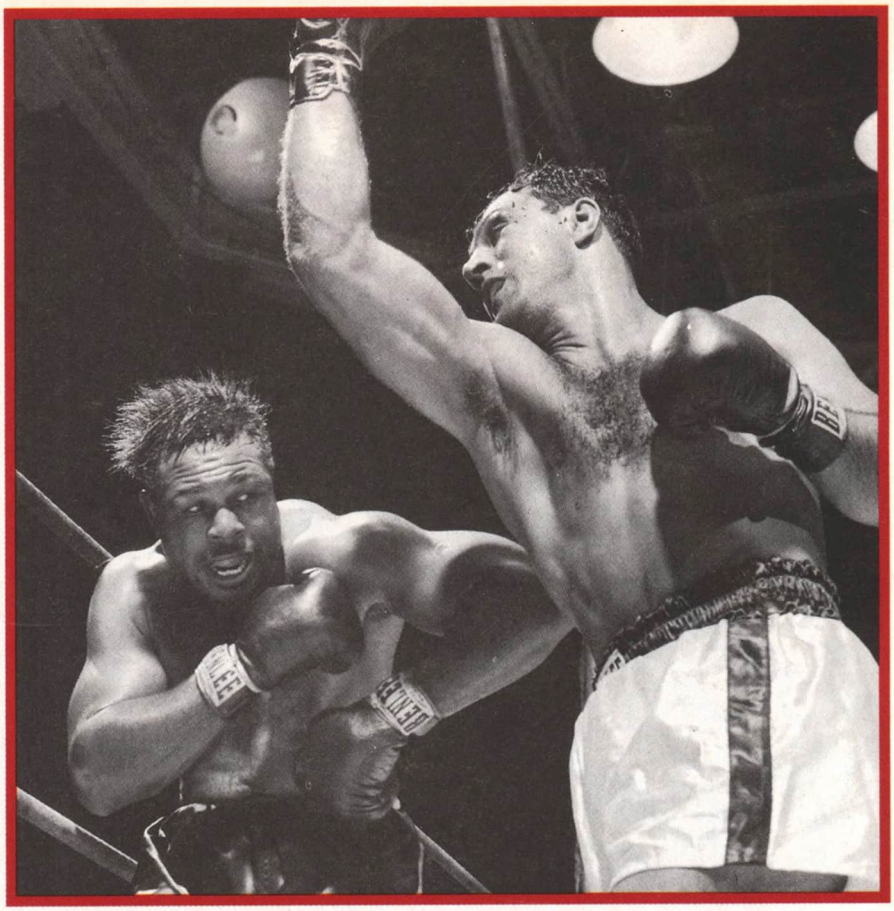
Marciano is not a rich man. His friends say he has not more than $250,000 salted away, and that he is sure of at least $1,000 a month for the rest of his life, in addition to other revenues.

The day Rocky said he was through, he tipped the beam at 212 pounds, some 23 over his best fighting weight. He is the muscle-bound type and, to be fit for a fight, must keep in shape all the year round. That means a perpetual state of light training, and that's not fun.

"I could go on," Rocky said. "I feel fine and have not yet tired of the grind. I could take on three more challengers at top speed. I am not afraid of anybody who might want to be the champion. I am not ill, and it would take me only three months training to get into condition for a title bout."

Mrs. Marciano had been urging her husband to retire, and he had promised action by May. He had hinted what he was about to do in interviews in South America.

It is conceivable that the bald fact that no spectacular opposition confronted him had something to do with Marciano's decision. To carry a fighter through a severe training regimen, to keep a champion on his toes, eager for the ring again, there must be the factor of excitement, of contest.



Experts speculated that another reason Marciano retired was because there were no credible contenders left to beat. He'd already knocked out Moore in his final defense (pictured), and Moore was the only challenger around capable of helping create a big gate.

In Marciano's case, that factor had ceased to exist. For him, one fight had become like another, just a medium for picking up another purse and handing most of it over to Uncle Sam.

You train long and hard, you take your chances in the ring, you get belted around, see your eyes cut, your nose split in half, and then the tax man walks in and grabs the biggest piece of the pie. And that's the way it has to be. And, of course, there is manager Weill's split too.

It has been said that some of the circumstances that helped Marciano to make up his mind developed from the International Boxing Club's troubles from its defense of a federal suit, from the California Cox investigation, and from unsavory ring outcroppings in general.

This has to be doubted. Marciano, the champion, never was involved in anything shady or questionable. He trained hard, did his best, beat his man, and went home. For him, the poor press of boxing had no repercussions. He personally was not involved.

Marciano did have one quarrel with fight critics. No matter how hard he hit or how early he knocked out his challenger, the writers invariably went overboard for the beaten man: "Moore Superb In His Courage," and "Cockell Game In Defeat," and other such effusions, one on

Marciano felt he never received the credit he deserved, especially for his punching power. Frequently after a knockout victory, it was his victim, such as Don Cockell, who garnered the headlines.

Marciano was a colorful champion who lived a simple life. In retirement, "The Brockton Blockbuster" was able to stay home more often. "It'll be good to have him around town again," one of Rocky's pals said.

top of the other, with Marciano's shortcomings as a boxer always played up, big.

Rocky never pretended to be a Jim Corbett for science. He was one of the greatest hitters the ring has seen. He never received full credit for his prowess.

Now the Rock is gone, and the fun begins for those who could not aspire to his crown when he wore it.

A visit to Brockton, Massachusetts, where Rocky Marciano has his home, where he was born, revealed a strange reaction to his retirement.

Usually, a town of that size, glorying in its possession of so eminent a figure, wants him to go on and on. But Brockton, 24 hours after the retirement announcement, seemed glad that Rocky had called it a career.

"It'll be good to have him around town again," said one of Marciano's pals. "As champion, he rarely was home."

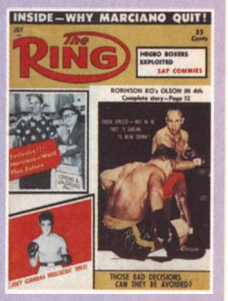
"The Marcianos live very simply," said the man in the barbershop. "His two million ought to keep them safe from the wolf for the rest of their lives."

"He went as high as he could go, and now, he could go no higher, only down," another bystander offered. "He could get hurt, which always is possible for a guy in the ring, especially at 33, and then what would be the fun? I am glad he's through. And he is through, if he says so."

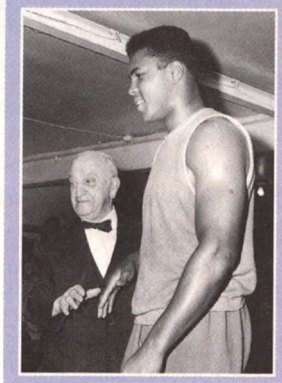
Some of the folks felt that Marciano might be a savior of the town, which once was the shoe making capital of the country and now has little activity in that line. Marciano has been talking of going into a shoe factory.

ADDENDUM: Unlike so many fighters throughout history, Marciano stayed retired. He capitalized on his popularity by traveling the country, working the lucrative speaking engagement circuit. On August 31, 1969, Marciano was killed in a plane crash near Newton, Iowa, at age 45. He was inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in 1990. In May 1999, the United States Postal Service released a Rocky Marciano stamp, commemorating the all-time great. Rocky's amazing 49-0 (43) still holds up today as the only perfect record ever compiled by a heavyweight champion. ■

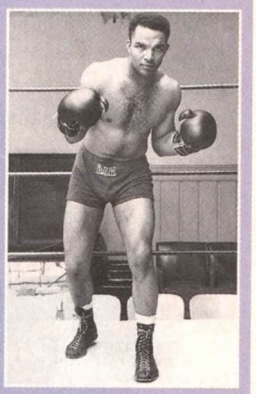
THE RING, July 1956



***The Cover*:** THE RING covered a potpourri of subjects on the front cover, from Rocky Marciano's retirement, to Sugar Ray Robinson's decisive victory over Bobo Olson, to middleweight Joey Giambra, who is hardly mentioned inside the issue. The cover did provide a few provocative teasers, offering an explanation for Marciano's retirement, exploring why the Soviets were saying black boxers were exploited, and wondering if bad decisions could be avoided.



***Nat Says "Shut Up, Commies"*:** THE RING Editor Nat Fleischer took a swipe at a Soviet writer who complained about the plight of black boxers in America, asserting that blacks didn't get championship opportunities because of their race. Fleischer's response was that the Soviet's appraisal was laughable. Fleischer pointed out that black fighters did get opportunities, like the one that would come for Cassius Clay.



***Making Machen*:** THE RING focused on heavyweight contender Eddie Machen, who had won 13 straight fights and was rising up the rankings. Machen fought so much as a kid that his family urged him to become a fighter and get paid for it. With Rocky Marciano's announced retirement, Machen was believed to be a viable threat to win the vacant crown. Machen had gained attention by beating Julio Mederos and contender Nino Valdes.

***Hungry Fighters*:** Many retired champions, such as Bob Olin and Jack Dempsey, went into the restaurant business. Dempsey had such a lasting hold on the public that his restaurant, opened in 1936, was a must stop for anyone visiting New York City.

***Fighter Of The Month*:** Sugar Ray Robinson won the laurels for successfully defending the middleweight title against Bobo Olson. Robinson upped his personal record against the Hawaii-born Olson to 4-0. Olson tried mauling Robinson inside, but that ended in the fourth when Sugar Ray landed a right under the heart and then connected with a crushing left hook that spelled the end.

THE FIGHT DOCTOR

DAY-BEFORE-THE-FIGHT WEIGH-INS: LIFE SAVER OR ABUSE OF THE SYSTEM?

By Margaret Goodman, MD

The so-called junior welterweight match between Miguel Cotto and DeMarcus Corley is a recent example of how the current practice of day-before-the-fight weigh-ins can skew the concept of weight classes to such a degree that one boxer can actually enter the ring several weight divisions above his rival.

Although Cotto and Corley were both within the division limit at the official weigh-in, according to HBO's day-of-the-fight weigh-in, Cotto (at 157 pounds) was a middleweight when he got into the ring, while Corley was still a junior welter at 140. This sort of disparity negates the very reason weight divisions were created in the first place.

"The notion of different weight classes for different sized boxers was formulated in the mid-19th century in order to bring fairness and safety to the rough and tumble world of bare-knuckle prize fighting," explained THE RING Editor-in-Chief Nigel Collins.

At one time, boxers would step on a scale, weigh in, drink a cup of liquid, and then duck between the ropes to fight. That severe practice gradually gave way to mid-day weigh-ins the day of the fight, a system that was in use for most of the 20th century. But in the mid-1980s, in an effort to lessen dehydration in boxers, Dr. Flip Homansky and the Nevada State Athletic Commission spearheaded a successful movement to change the weigh-in to the day *before* the fight. This is now the rule rather than the exception in most states.

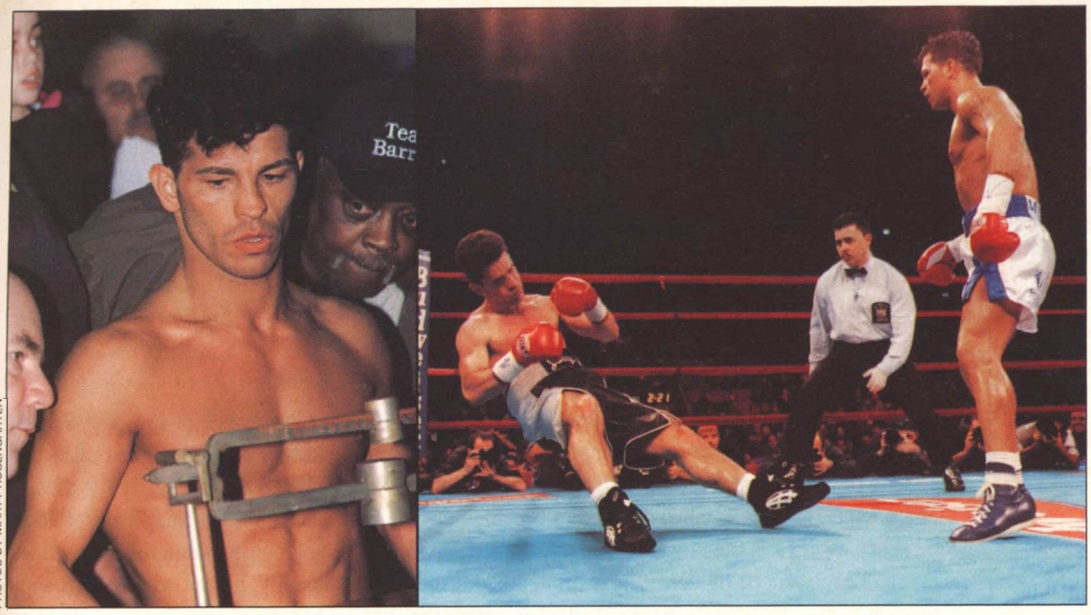
PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/HBO

Cotto was really a middleweight when he stopped junior welter Corley

"By having the weigh-in the day of the fight, kids came in so dry and weak, they were not at their best physically or mentally," said Homansky. "A number of times I saw kids vomiting at the side of the ring from a combination of dehydration and trying to re-hydrate so quickly."

Originally, the main concern was that in only six to eight hours, a fighter could replace significant amounts of free water (water in excess of what you lose naturally), but that period of time didn't give the body enough time to address the cellular problems that occur from dehydrating.

Dr. Homansky had also hoped moving the weigh-in to 24 hours before the fight would serve as a springboard to educate



PHOTOS BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Gatti gained 19 pounds between the weigh-in (above left) and his second-round kayo of Gamache (above right), who never fought again

promoters, managers, trainers, and fighters about the dangers of dehydration.

This well-intentioned change has resulted in what can be viewed as an unfair advantage to some fighters, and also has led to fighters competing in weight classes where they otherwise don't belong. For example, in February 2000, Arturo Gatti gained 19 pounds between the day-before-the-fight weigh-in and his bout with Joey Gamache. Subsequently, Gamache suffered one of the most devastating knockouts ever seen, spent two days in a hospital for a concussion, and was never able to fight again.

Nonetheless, the fighter gaining the most weight after the weigh-in is not automatically the winner. A few years ago, Nevada conducted a six-month study comparing win-loss record with which competitor gained the most weight between the weigh-in and fight time. It was discovered that there was no advantage to gaining excessive amounts of weight. In fact, the majority of fighters adding more than 10 percent to their body weight following the weigh-in lost their fight. Accordingly, Cotto, who had a 12 percent weight gain coming into the Corley fight, might well have been at a disadvantage.

Another issue of significance is that the day-before-the-fight weigh-in frequently takes place earlier than the prescribed 24 hours before the fight. Often the weigh-in takes place 30 hours before the fight, and as a result fighters are not just gaining excess fluid, they are actually gaining body weight.

Greg Sirb, executive director of the Pennsylvania Athletic Commission and a former collegiate wrestler, is a strong believer in same day weigh-ins or a system where fighters weigh in twice, once the day before and then again on the day of the fight.

In Pennsylvania, boxers all weigh in between 8 and 9 a.m. the day of the fight. For championship fights, the fighters weigh in twice: at 7 p.m. the night before, then again the morning of the contest. If competing at less than 140 pounds, the fighter can gain a maximum of eight pounds. If competing over 140 pounds, they can gain no more than 10 pounds. The average noted weight gain under this system is between four to 6½ pounds. Fighters at light heavyweight and above do not weigh in a second time.

Sirb believes that the day-before-weigh-in has created an atmosphere that actually encourages rapid weight loss and dehydration, and allows binge eating following the weigh-in.

"I firmly believe that our sport and our boxers suffer from ill-advised weight loss practices by granting them the privilege to weigh in well before the event," said Sirb. "The current practice is wrong for both boxers. For the boxer who starves and dehydrates, the rapid weight gain is unhealthy; while the boxer who does not gain a lot of weight after the weigh-in is frequently forced to compete against someone outside his weight class."

According to Sirb, the National Collegiate Athletic Association changed its weigh-in policy for wrestlers from the day before to the day of the contest when three deaths occurred almost back-to-back-to-back in the mid-1990s. Each case was linked to dehydration. Since the change, fewer cases of rapid weight cutting and rapid weight gain have occurred.

Former IBF junior lightweight titleholder and current trainer Roberto Garcia is among those not happy with the idea of returning to same day weigh-ins.

"It would place too much stress on fighters to make weight and increase risk of injuries," Garcia said. "And it would not discourage dehydration." He agreed, however, that in the long term, the switch back to day-of-the-fight weigh-ins might encourage younger fighters, especially amateurs just turning pro, to fight at more appropriate weight classes.

The truth is that for a well-conditioned athlete, the time of the weigh-in should not matter. Trainers, managers, and especially the boxers must accept responsibility for attaining their contracted weight in a sensible manner. They should also understand that rapid weight loss and weight gain would more often than not lessen their chance of winning and contribute to long-term medical problems.

Perhaps returning to same day weigh-ins or switching to a two weigh-in system similar to Pennsylvania's will correct the problem, but there are numerous arguments on both sides. The one thing that's certain is that commissions must revisit the issue, because the day-before-the-fight method has given rise to a whole new set of unforeseen and unexpected problems. ■

Dr. Goodman will be happy to answer questions about the medical aspects of boxing in future columns. Please send inquiries to: The Fight Doctor, P.O. Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034.

COME OUT WRITING

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PETER PRINCIPLE

It's great to see in the June 2005 issue of THE RING EXTRA that heavyweight prospect Samuel Peter made the top-10 rankings at number 10. Even more significantly, Peter has a great chance to beat many of the guys ahead of him right now, and within a year or two, he could easily top the list. Peter has come around at the right time to breathe new life into a division that may well be in its worst shape ever. He's got power in both fists, good boxing skills, and considerable ring savvy for a relatively inexperienced fighter. If he is brought along slowly and steadily, he can win the title within two years, and restore the excitement of heavyweight boxing. Three cheers for the "Nigerian Nightmare"!

CONSTANTINOS E. SCAROS
Cliffside Park, NJ

Seeing Samuel Peter ranked as one of THE RING's top 10 heavyweights is exciting. I have followed him ever since he was featured in "New Faces." It's time for all the pessimists to stop hacking on the heavyweight division. Our champ Vitali Klitschko is a damned good one. Yes, we would love him a lot more if he grew up in the Bronx, but he didn't, and things could be much worse. We could have buzz killer John Ruiz as champion. Heavyweight boxing will always have a new hero, and mine is Samuel Peter.

PATRICK LARZIK
Las Vegas, NV

PAC WILL BE BACK

Manny Pacquiao once again showed how big his heart is in his recent war with Erik Morales. Despite taking some really big shots from the bigger and taller "El Terrible," and suffering a nasty cut due to a headbutt, he fought a hell of a fight and finished on his feet. With all due respect to Morales, I think the changes made in Pac-Man's team during the course of his training affected his performance. But Pacquiao will be back again with a vengeance, and with all the lessons he's learned, he'll be a much better fighter

SHERWIN SANTIAGO
shrwnsantiago@yahoo.com

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Slugger Samuel Peter, pictured knocking down Yanqui Diaz en route to a fifth-round kayo, seems to be winning new fans every time he destroys another victim. Readers Constantinos Scaros and Patrick Larzik both wrote letters supporting the Nigerian's inclusion among THE RING's top 10 heavyweights.

PASS THE HANKIE

Sly Stallone's reality show, *The Contender*, really makes me sick. I've seen two episodes, and I think I've seen every guy except Peter Man-

fredo Jr. cry. Do all boxers cry this much, or is it just these guys?

RORY DOWD
San Francisco, CA

RIVERA RIP-OFF

I was at ringside for the WBA welterweight title fight between Jose Antonio Rivera and Luis Collazo. I have been a fight fan for more than 40 years and read THE RING from cover to cover. Last night's fight was one of the most action-packed fights I've seen in a long time. On the negative side, it was the worst decision I've seen in a long time. Rivera chased Collazo for 12 rounds, and, I thought, controlled the fight, but still lost. I'm unsure of what fight the judges were watching. It makes me wonder who really decides the winner.

RICK ELLBEG
Worcester, MA

LONG LIVE THE KING

The man I call "King Of The Boxing World" is Bernard Hopkins, because he's been a champion for 10 years and the P-4-P king for three years. I think the fight with Jermain Taylor will be the finest moment in Hopkins' career, but also the hardest. I think Hopkins is going to win a unanimous 12-round decision by taking Taylor back to the streets and the gyms of Philly where monsters are created. Hopkins needs to stay on the inside this fight, rough the kid up, and take him out of his game plan. If you watch Taylor's last three fights, you'll see a lot of problems they don't mention during the fight. One, he never fights on the inside; he just holds and waits for the ref to break it up. Two, his power in my eyes is questionable because the opponents he fought sometimes look like they are just sitting there letting Taylor hit them. But he's still going seven to 12 rounds with these guys, and some weren't even true middleweights.

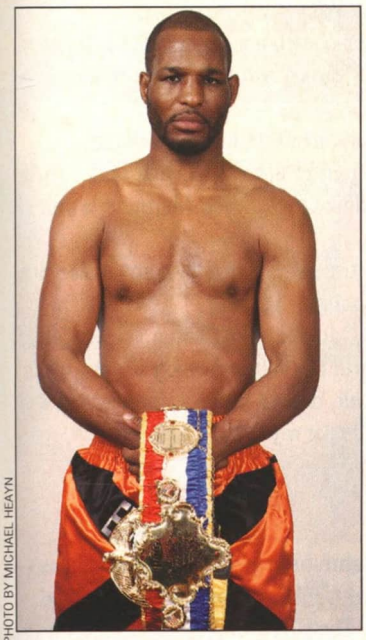

PHOTO BY MICHAEL HEAYN

Undisputed middleweight champion and P-4-P leader Bernard Hopkins has a big fan in reader Andrew Lapachet, who thinks a match with Jermain Taylor would result in both Hopkins' finest hour and toughest fight.

ANDREW LAPACHET
Hayward, CA

BEWARE OF THE RED,WHITE, & BLUE

Bravo to ESPN for its first pay-per-view event. The fights were competitive and entertaining. I do not, however, see much in Sugar Shane Mosley's future. He has been a stellar ambassador for the sport, but I think it's time he call it quits. If Mosley can't put away the likes of David Estrada, he wouldn't have a prayer versus THE RING champ Zab Judah.

Mosley, however, is not my main concern. I had a letter published in the November 2002 issue of THE RING EXTRA about a most alarming trend in our beloved sport, but Kermit Cintron obviously didn't read the issue. Therefore, I will state my warning again: Wearing red, white, and blue guarantees you will lose. I applaud our Puerto Rican and American fighters who want to honor their countries by wearing the stars and stripes. But please, my beloved pugilists (and fans who bet on them), I implore you, save yourself a beatdown by keeping the stars and stripes off your trunks. For those who think I'm a nut, please refer to Hopkins-Trinidad, Lewis-Rahman-Lewis II, Mosley-Forrest I, and *Rocky IV*.

JOHN IVERSON
New York, NY

MORE MORMECK

I would like to congratulate the new unified cruiserweight champion of the world, Jean-Marc Mormeck. He put on a fantastic display of pressure, poise, and ring generalship during his victory over previously unbeaten Wayne Braithwaite. This was the most action-packed fight I have ever seen either fighter in. I always thought that Mormeck would be a dangerous match for Braithwaite. I've seen the Frenchman make tough fighters quit, but when he made three-time former titleholder Virgil Hill capitulate, I knew that Braithwaite would have to be on top of his game in order to notch a victory. With the potential of both Mormeck and Braithwaite to provide entertaining fights versus each other, I look forward to seeing a rematch or perhaps even a trilogy.

ROGER RAMPAGE
Brooklyn, NY ■

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND

Jean-Marc Mormeck punishes Wayne Braithwaite with a right cross in a cruiserweight unification bout that saw Mormeck win a unanimous 12-round decision and THE RING championship belt. Reader Roger Rampage was impressed by both Mormeck and the two-way action, and wouldn't mind seeing an encore.

LOOKING AHEAD

By Joe Santoliquito

WILL JUAREZ' DREAM BECOME A REALITY?

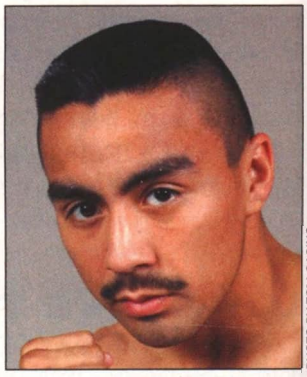

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO

Juarez is poised to win his first title belt

Since he was a kid, **Rocky Juarez** has dreamed of being raised up on someone's shoulders holding aloft a title belt. The hard-punching 2000 Olympic featherweight silver medalist will get his chance to make that dream come true against WBC featherweight titleholder **In Jin Chi** on July 15, at the Pechanga Resort and Casino, in Temecula, California.

The bout carries Fight of the Year potential. Juarez, 23-0 (16), enters the fight coming off stoppage victories over veteran Guty Espadas Jr. (KO 2) and rugged Juan Carlos Ramirez (KO 1). Now the 25-year-old from Houston, Texas, feels he's ready for Chi, 30-2-1 (18).

"From what I've seen of Chi, I see an animal," Juarez said. "I see a lot of durability, a lot of heart. He looks like a brawler, but he has some skill and he has a great chin. He's a fighter capable of beating anybody. I look for a tough fight and I'm looking for the opportunity to fulfill a lifetime dream."

The featherweight division remains vibrant with **Manny Pacquiao** as world champion and **Juan Manuel Marquez** lurking as THE RING's number-one contender, but the 126-pound class has been weakened considerably by the defection of marquee fighters **Marco Antonio Barrera** and **Erik Morales**, who have moved up to the junior lightweight division.

Still, Juarez would like to keep the spotlight on the featherweights as a premier TV attraction.

"Featherweight is a division that people watch; it's one the hardest divisions in boxing," Juarez said. "There are great fights in this division. I think Pacquiao is going to move back down to 126 and Marquez is still at 126. But I think that this is my time."

If things work out the way Juarez expects in July, he's going to take his time before thinking about stepping back into the ring against someone as dangerous as Pacquiao or Marquez, though.

"Personally, the way I feel is that if I win the WBC belt, I'll defend it," Juarez said. "I'm a young fighter and I want to get that extra experience. I think it would be best for me to win the belt and enjoy it for a while, make some money. I always felt that every boxer out there should win a belt, defend it twice, then go out and get another belt. Going from Chi right to Pacquiao would be a little nuts. I'll take my time."

LISTEN UP

Just when it looked as if the ever-changing **Vitali Klitschko-Hasim Rahman** heavyweight world championship fight was finally set for a June 18, the date has shifted once again. Klitschko was originally supposed to face Rahman on April 30, but the world champ hurt his leg while jogging. The fight was rescheduled for June 18, but that date was cancelled when Klitschko required surgery to remove a bone spur from his back. Despite the postponements, it is hoped that the Klitschko-Rahman match will happen in the fall. "It looks like sometime in September and we're looking at Madison Square Garden; that would be our preference," said **Shelly Finkel**, Klitschko's advisor. "We're hoping to get Vitali back into training by late-May or early-June."

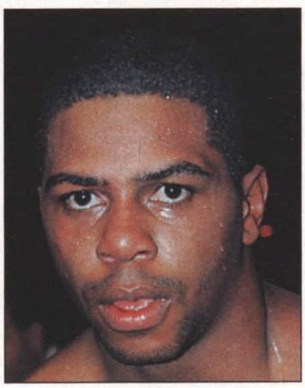

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Barrett may face Rahman for the WBC "Interim Championship"

Meanwhile, the WBC may order Rahman to fight **Monte Barrett** for something called the "Interim Championship," while Klitschko recovers from surgery and gets ready to fight again … IBF super middleweight titlist **Jeff Lacy** may have a road trip ahead if he survives his August 8 clash with **Robin Reid** in St. Petersburg, Florida, Lacy's hometown. **Gary Shaw**, Lacy's promoter, said "Left Hook" would face **Joe Calzaghe,** THE RING's number-one rated super middleweight, next—in England. "I have complete confidence in Jeff, and we have no problems going over to Calzaghe's country," Shaw said. "Jeff's traveled all over the world as an amateur. We've spoken to (Calzaghe's promoter) Frank Warren, and I would say there is a 95 percent chance we can get it done." ■

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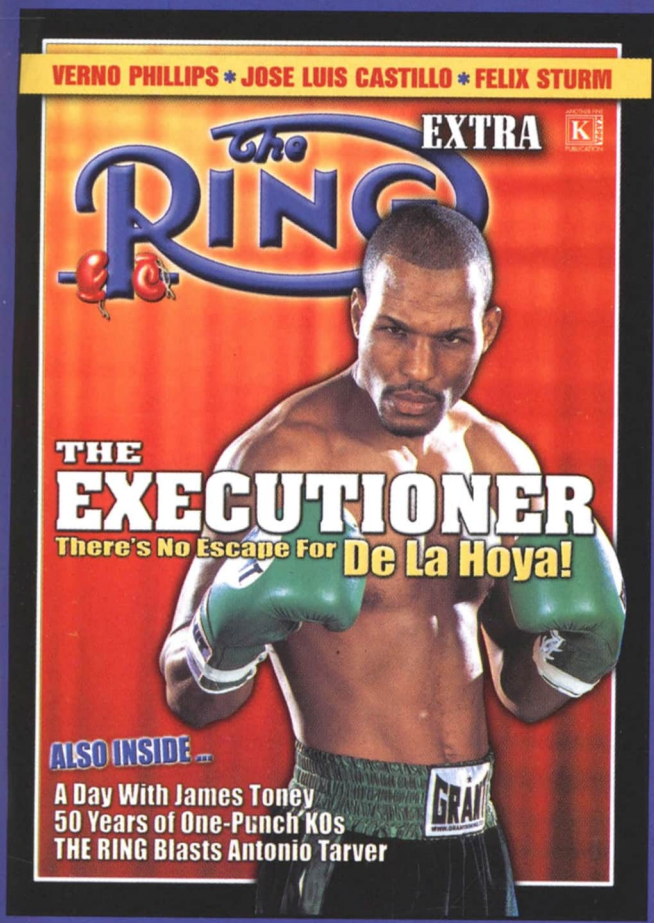

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